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JOHNNY BROWN & CO.

AT SCHOOL; or,
THE DEACON'S BOY AT HIS OLD TRICKS.

By PETER PAD.



He made a bow, and then a head appeared between the outstretched legs. "What does this mean?" gasped Blodgett, his bald head shining and his ear-locks bristling with fright. "Who are you, sir?" growled Simpson, swelling up like a toad.

Johnny Brown & Co. at School

OR,

The Deacon's Boy at His Old Tricks.

By PETER PAD,

Author of "The Deacon's Boy," "Little Tommy Bounce," "The Shortys' Minstrels," etc., etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

If ever there was a young hustler it was Johnny Brown.

He had been brought up in the family of a deacon, too.

Bless your innocent heart, that didn't make any difference.

He was known all over the county as the worst boy in town.

As far as the opinions of old maids and stupid fossils went, it was a true bill.

In the opinion of those who love fun, however, Johnny Brown was a regular brick.

He was up to more mischief in an hour than you could scold him for in a day.

He would work rackets on the deacon, the squire of the town, the store-keeper, the butcher, the barber, the hired man, the maid of all work, the undertaker, the doctor, the apothecary, and any one else that happened to come along.

If it wasn't one snap it was another, and he was never at a loss for a trick to play upon some one.

That's why they called him the worst boy in town.

He was the liveliest, at all events.

Well, some people don't like to have pranks played on them.

There were many who objected to Johnny's doing so.

That's why the deacon sent him away to school.

"If he gets at his old tricks there, I won't hear nothin' about 'em," remarked the deacon sagaciously.

"He'll be expelled from that there school inside of a month, and then we'll have him back here a tormentin' of us," snapped the deacon's sister, a cross old gal of the most pronounced type of old maid. "You'd much better have sent him to sea."

The Deacon did not take his sister's advice, however, and Johnny was sent to a big boarding school, distant two days' journey from the village.

Johnny did not know a soul when he got to the school.

That made no odds to him, however.

It would not be long before he knew everybody within ten miles.

That's the sort of boy he was.

Johnny reached the school the day before the fall term opened and knew all that there was to learn by the time the other boys came.

Horatio Blodgett, A. M., B. A., Ph. D., Q. X., and a lot of other things w'hich nearly exhausted the alphabet in expressing them, was the boss of the educational mill, besides being a man to remember.

He was very tall and not much fatter than a beanpole and, as he always dressed in black, looked thinner than he was.

He had no more hair on the top of his head than Uncle Ned of pleasant memory, but, just above each ear was a short bristling tuft of hair, just to show that the soil was not entirely sterile.

Professor Blodgett was the principal and general manager of the Birchtown Collegiate Institute, where Johnny was now to abide, and what he did not know about running a place of that sort was not worth knowing.

His chief coadjutor, for he had several, was Mr. Solomon Simpson, teacher of English branches, and a good fist at them, too.

Simpson was tall and stout, and had lots of hair, wearing a pair of long side whiskers after the fashion of English lords, and being just as pompous.

You wouldn't catch him dressing in black, if he knew it.

He wore checks, stripes, plaids and mixtures, and the louder his clothes were the better he seemed to enjoy them, being a regular dude in that line.

Then there was Peter Pilgrim, the janitor, who imagined himself the next man in importance to Blodgett himself.

When Johnny first arrived, he saw a funny little man, with a big black beard and a wooden leg stumping up and down the broad piazza in front of the house.

"Hallo, Pegtoes," remarked our hero. "Where is the boss?"

"I'm Mr. Pilgrim, you young sarsebox," said the wooden-legged man, "and you don't want to furgit it, nuther."

"Oh, you're Pilgrim, are you, Timberheel?"

"Yes, I are."

"Well, if you're a pilgrim, I'm a stranger, so we ought to hitch together first-rate."

"I don't 'sociate with school-boys," snorted Peter, emphasizing his remark with a thump of his wooden leg, "and if you make any trouble you'll get reported."

"Are you the assistant desk thumper?" asked Johnny.

"No, I ain't you young lump o' suet. I'm the orator of the 'stablishment, as old Blodgett calls it, but it's easier to say janitor, and if you sellers makes too much muss about the place, I'll—"

"Oh, you mean curator, I suppose, old Mahogany Foot?"

"Here, you young puddin', don't you get to callin' names at the start now," growled Peter Pilgrim with another thump.

"You called me a lump of suet, you old pirate."

"Did I? Well, so you are, but don't go to giving me any sarce, or you'll get tried out. Comin' here to get eddication, are you?"

"Yes."

"You must say 'sir' to me, you young puddin' bag. That's discipline, that is."

"Well, Petey," answered Johnny with a chuckle, "you've got one wooden leg now, but you'll have to turn into a tree and be wooden headed as well before you'll get me to put on any such frills as that. Ta-ta, Stumps."

Then Johnny waltzed away to find somebody who knew something, while Peter whistled and observed to himself:

"Well, if I ain't blowed! The sarce of the risin' generation is something to surprise you. What that young imp needs is a rope's end, to larn him his dooty to his superiors."

We may remark just here that Peter Pilgrim had formerly been a warrant officer in the navy, and hence his wooden leg and his straining after discipline.

However, Johnny had no objection to playing tricks on Peter Pilgrim any more than on other folks, for he lived for fun, and could get it out of most anything.

It would not be long before the Deacon's Boy would be at his old tricks again, and when he buckled down for business, then look out for larks.

After finding where he was to sleep, putting

away his boxes and so forth, Johnny started out to get acquainted with the place and the people on it.

Just back of the house he came upon a sawed-off, red-headed specimen of humanity, jabbing a spade into the ground.

There was a garden here, and Johnny proceeded to walk through it without paying the slightest attention to the man with the spade.

"Hould on, phwere are yez goin'?" bawled the man.

"Poor man, he must be blind," said Johnny, in a tone of compassion, as he went on.

"Begorrah, then, I'm not blind, and I see very well phwere yez are going," was the answer.

"It must be a big parrot, dressed up like a man," said Johnny, musingly, "and he doesn't mean anything by what he says."

"Begorrah, then, ye'll fround eout that I mean somethin', me buck," growled the other. "Come back here. Don't ye know this is the garden?"

"Oh, is it?" asked Johnny, innocently. "I thought it was a ball ground."

"Begorrah, luck at the innocence av him. Sure, he must be goin' into the infant class."

Johnny kept right on, however, until the man ran after him, yelling:

"Come here, ye vilyan. Don't yez know ye have no right to inter the garden?"

"No, I didn't," and Johnny went on.

"Well, ye know it neow. Ye mustn't walk here."

"Oh, why didn't you say so l?" asked the young scamp.

"Faix, I did."

"No, excuse me, but you did not. You asked me if I knew it."

"Oh, begorra, hark to the innocence av him," muttered the gardener. "Faix, I think he's cracked."

"Who are you?" asked Johnny. "You look like Little Lord Fauntleroy."

"Well, I'm not him. I'm Pepper, so I am."

"H'm, yes, red Pepper I presume."

"No, sor, I'm not red Pepper at all, but just Pepper."

"You're red-headed enough to be red Pepper, anyhow, and snappy enough, but if you get to fooling with me you'll be ground Pepper."

"Go on now, ye lump av butter, and don't be callin' names. I'm only plain Pepper, I told ye."

"What do they keep you here for, Plain Pepper? To kill rats or frighten crows?"

"I'm the gardener, and me name is Pepper. Did the folks that sent ye here take this for an idjit asylum?"

"Don't give me any Pepper sauce, young fellow," said Johnny. "It doesn't agree with me."

"What might be your name, annyhow?" asked Pepper.

"You've heard of Ben Butler?"

"Sure, I have."

"Well, he's a friend of mine."

"Ye don't say."

"Call me a liar, will you?" and Johnny made a sudden pass at the little redhead.

Pepper dodged and then the young rascal suddenly thrust out his foot.

When Pepper found time to breathe, he was sitting on top of a very moist muck heap, while Johnny was walking away warbling to himself:

"Oh, my, ain't he a daisy!
Look at his new Sunday clothes.
They say he's a masher,
He drives the girls crazy,
But he's got a big wart on his nose."

"Begorrah, it's a carbuncle ye'll have on your nose, me foine man," growled Pepper, getting up. "I don't care if Ben Butler is yer friend, or the Prisident aither, and av yez don't keep out av me garden I'll make hash av yez."

Johnny Brown paid no heed to Pepper's guft, but strolled off toward the gates, where a big stage load of boys was just entering the grounds.

"Ah! there, fellows!" he cried. "Come to join the circus, have you? Come on and I'll introduce you to the chief performers."

"Are you the clown?" sang out one of the boys.

"No, the position is vacant. I guess you can have it, though."

"You must be the boss of the monkeys then," cried another boy.

"That's it exactly, and I'd like to know what you are doing out of your cage?"

None of the other boys tried to say anything smart to Johnny after that.

All hands were soon good friends, however, and Johnny had picked out half a dozen, whom he knew would make the best of chums.

Boys kept coming all that day and part of the next, and Blodgett and his assistants were kept busy putting them into classes.

Things got to going at last, and Johnny Brown showed that there were very few cold days for him in the matter of standing in his studies.

He could always find time to get his lessons, as well as put up jobs, and that's why no one thought of suspecting him when a lark was played on the teachers.

Johnny and half a dozen of the leading spirits were not long in leaguing themselves together for the purpose of having fun.

They were sworn to stick by one another, and to play as many tricks on outsiders as possible, but none on each other.

They called themselves the Boomers, and they certainly gave fun the biggest boom it had ever had in the Birchtown Collegiate Institute since the place was started.

One thing in particular the Boomers were agreed upon and that was that every new boy coming into the school must have a job put up on him the first thing.

This agreement had not been made but a few days when a prospective arrival was announced.

The new comer, it was announced, was Master Billy Bounce, of Racketville, Bounce County, in the state of Ohoho.

To those of my readers, who are acquainted with the Bounce family, I may state that Billy was a fourth or fifth cousin of Little Tommy Bounce, the third in line of a family of jokers.

One of the brothers of the first and original Tommy Bounce had three sons, and one of these was the father of two boys. Billy being the oldest and a rattle to boot.

Those who do not know the Bounce family need only to be told that Billy was born in a funny month, at a funny time, and with a grin on his juvenile mug, and that his chief object in life was to make fun.

And this was the sort of duck that the Boomers were to try their first racket upon.

Billy Bounce was to arrive on a Saturday at noon, and Pepper was to go to the railroad station for him, and drive him to Blodgett's.

Saturday was a holiday, as a rule, but upon this occasion there was to be a big spelling match and recitation in the great school room, a lot of the village notables being invited.

When it was known that Billy Bounce was to arrive on such a train, Johnny Brown said to the Boomers:

"Fellow skylarkers, it behooves us to give young Bounce a send off. I move that we meet him, and escort him here in tip top shape."

"What sort of a job is that, I'd like to know?" asked Sam Berries, one of the Boomers.

"We ain't giving fellows receptions, are we?" growled Tom Wilson, another of the gang.

"If you two duffers won't disarrange your wearing apparel," remarked Johnny, "I'll elucidate what I mean, and then if you think you can do any better, say so."

Then the young joker gave away his scheme and told just how it could be worked.

The Boomers gave it their unanimous approval.

Well, Saturday came and Pepper hitched one of Blodgett's nags into a light wagon and went off to meet the train bringing Master Billy Bounce.

When the train stopped and the dozen or more passengers got out, Pepper looked around and shouted:

"Is there any bye here phwat's goin' to th' Institoot?"

"Ah, there, Terra Cotta, you want me, I guess," said a plump, jolly-looking little fellow, dressed in a neat suit and carrying a small hand bag and a gold-handled umbrella. "Are you from Blodgett's?"

"I am, begob, and if ye're goin' there, it's manners ye want to l'arn the forst av all," muttered Pepper.

"You aren't Blodgett, are you?" asked the young fellow.

"No, I'm not, I'm Pepper. Who are you?"

"You must be green Pepper, not to know that. I'm Billy Bounce, of Bounce County."

"Well, I'm not green Pepper nor red Pepper either, so don't be callin' me names."

"Well, don't get peppery, Pepper. Do they use your head to light the school-house by? Saves them a lot, I should think."

"Never moind phwat ye think, but get into the carrt and lose no time abeout it."

"Get into the carrot, eh? The one in your head do you mean."

"I didn't say carrot, I said carrt," growled Pepper.

"Wagon, you mean? All right, old conflagration. Get along with you."

"Begorrah, av all the byes in the Institoot wor loike this wan and young Johnny Breown," mused Pepper, "I think I'd go woild in a fortnight."

Billy took a seat beside Pepper and away they went licketty clip, toward the Birchtown Collegiate Institute at a gallop.

The red-headed driver had reached a strip of woods through which the road wound, and just beyond which were the school gates, when he suddenly stopped and reined in his horse.

Well he might do so.

Six or eight figures with white pillow-cases over their heads suddenly sprang out at both sides of the road.

Two of them held the horse and four more jumped into the wagon.

Two held Pepper, while the other two grabbed Billy Bounce and passed him to two others in the road.

Then the whole gang rushed Billy into the woods, while Pepper drove like mad to the Institute.

"Begorrah, the White Caps have got me sure!" muttered the driver, as he applied the whip to the nag, "and I niver did anything out av the way, aither!"

The invaders did not follow him, however, and he reached the school in safety.

Billy wasn't a bit scared when he was seized thus unceremoniously and hustled into the wood, but he felt a little curiosity as to what his captors intended to do with him.

He rightly guessed that they were schoolboys, but beyond that identification was impossible.

"Well, boys, what's up?" he asked, when a halt was called.

"We are the Boomers!" said a hoarse voice, "and every new-comer must be put through before he can enter the school."

Then one of the Boomers produced a suit of clothes, and two others proceeded to put Billy Bounce into it.

It was a peculiar suit, to say the least.

It was made all in one piece, to start with.

That was not its only peculiarity.

The big, blouse-like coat was at the bottom, and the baggy trousers were on top.

Moreover, when Billy was put into it, he could not get his arms down, but had to keep them extended above his head.

Shoes were put on his hands, and he looked as if he were standing on his head.

He had no trouble about walking, but he did not know how funny he looked.

"That's the way you must enter the presence of your future preceptor," said the gruff voice.

Billy could not see any way out of the business. He wisely concluded to submit, therefore.

All the same, he resolved to get hunk on the jokers for this little racket.

"Hurry up!" said the gruff voice, and the Boomers hustled Billy along in lively style.

He could not see anything, but he knew when he reached the school and got inside by the sound.

Unknown to him, the jokers whipped the pillow cases off their heads when they got inside, and gave them to one of their numbers.

Then he heard a sudden scuffling, and a few moments after that, a door was opened and he was pushed forward.

"There you are," whispered some one. "Make your bow."

The great school-room was full of boys, visitors and tutors.

Blodgett with his bald head and Simpson with his whiskers sat on the platform.

Peter Pilgrim with his wooden leg, big beard and blue swallow-tail coat stood at the side of the platform to preserve order.

Suddenly the side door was thrown open and in walked a comical looking image.

It was a boy dressed in a clown suit walking on his head with his feet in the air.

He made a bow, and then a head appeared between the out-stretched legs.

The boys tittered, Blodgett jumped up in alarm, Simpson frowned and grabbed his whiskers, and Peter Pilgrim thumped on the floor with his wooden leg.

"What does this mean?" gasped Blodgett, his bald head shining and his ear-locks bristling with fright.

"Who are you, sir?" growled Simpson, swelling up like a toad.

"I'm Billy Bounce, if you please, and I've come here to go to school," said the oddity on the floor.

"Is this the way you enter a school-room, sir? Get on your feet, sir."

"Am on my feet, sir," and Billy shuffled them.

"Have you got four feet, like other calves then?" roared Whiskers.

"No, sir, only two, just like you."

The boys giggled and the teacher's whiskers twinkled.

"Take off that ridiculous costume and give an account of yourself," muttered Blodgett.

"Can't do it, sir. I'm tied into it."

Just then Pepper came flying into the room, crying out:

"Begorrah, sor, I think we'll all be robbed an' murdhered in our beds, sor. Twenty White Caps met me in the road, tuck the bye away from me, rin away wid him into the woods, an' gav the harse sich a belt that he niver stopped a-runnin' till he got half a moile beyant the institoot, an'—Powers above! phwat's that?"

A few questions to Pepper put matters in a more understandable light.

Then Billy was released from his masquerade suit and questioned.

"Your captors all wore white caps, did they?" asked Simpson.

"Yes, sir—pillow cases, I suppose."

"How big were they?"

"The regular size of pillow-cases, I think," returned Billy.

He wasn't giving anything away.

The boys had played a racket on him, but he wasn't going to tell on them for all that.

There was a better way than that to get square on them.

"I don't mean the pillow cases, I mean the boys who seized you," said Blodgett.

"I don't know that they were boys," answered Billy.

"Couldn't you recognize any of them?"

"No, sir. One pillow case looks just like another."

"Did they address each other?"

"Not that I heard."

It wasn't any use to try and get anything out of Young Bounce.

He did not know of anything that would lead to the detection of the Boomers.

At least he didn't tell it if he did.

He knew a good gag when he saw it, even if it was played on himself.

No one could have coaxed him to give the boys away, even had he known them.

He would give them just as good a racket some day, however.

For the present he would make the best of it, and laugh as heartily as the rest of the boys.

Blodgett gave the boys in general a lecture upon the sinfulness of practical joking, and then the exercises proceeded.

It did not take Billy Bounce long to get acquainted with the boys at Blodgett's.

He made up his mind very shortly that Johnny Brown, if not at the bottom of the job on him, was at least one of the most active workers in carrying it out.

He had but little trouble also in picking out nearly all of the gang by keeping his eyes and ears open.

He laughed about the affair with Johnny, and declared it was one of the best gags he had ever seen.

Master Brown never let on, however, that the scheme was his.

He knew too much.

By pumping Pepper, flattering Peter Pilgrim and watching the habits and natures of his schoolmates, however, he satisfied himself in a few days as to the identity of the jokers.

Then he gave his attention to turning the tables on them.

"I say, fellows," he said to Johnny and several others, just before bed-time one day in the next week, "come and have supper with me to-night, after the lights are out."

Nobody objected, of course, and the invitation was unanimously accepted.

After Peter Pilgrim had stumped all around the house, put out the lights and closed the doors,

seven or eight boys made their way noiselessly to Billy's room.

"Hallo, you're here, are you?" said Billy, kneeling on the floor and taking a big cake out of a box. "Sit down anywhere and make yourselves comfortable."

The boys sat on chairs, the table, the washstand and the bed.

Billy bustled about and fetched out a big jelly cake in layers, which he cut in generous-sized pieces.

"Help yourselves, boys," he said, passing the plate.

All hands took a hand.

Then they took a big bite.

All the other fellows had dusted, or were lying around loose, looking very miserable.

"You're a dandy!" said Billy.

"Thank you. This is one on me."

"You wouldn't show it, though."

"Neither would you give the Boomers away."

"I say, you and I ought to make a good team."

"I believe you. Do you want to come in?"

"Yes."

"What shall we call the firm?"

"What else should we call it but Johnny Brown & Co.?"

"It's a go."

"Then look out for larks."

"Houp la!"

in school-room after hours looking over some exercises and fell asleep.

Correcting juvenile compositions is drowsy work anyhow, and it was no wonder he became somnolent over it.

Sticking his feet on his desk and tipping his chair backward, he soon tumbled into a dandy doze and made music with his nose.

Presently along came Johnny Brown, looking for a book.

He twiggled that modern Solomon sitting there, and made up his mind to have a lark.

He did not chew gum himself, but many of the boys did, and he found a wad of it on top of one of the desks.



He made a bow, and then a head appeared between the outstretched legs. "What does this mean?" gasped Blodgett, his bald head shining and his ear-locks bristling with fright. "Who are you, sir?" growled Simpson, swelling up like a toad.

That's the time they got bit.
The inside of that cake looked like jelly.
It wasn't anything of the sort.
It was soft soap.
And all those funny boys got a bite.
What faces they did make, to be sure.
All but Johnny Brown.
He munched away as if he enjoyed it.

He knew he was bitten, but he was a regular Spartan for not showing it.

All the other boys began to sputter and choke, and look sick and rush around trying to find relief.

He did not do any of these things.

He simply swallowed the awful stuff, looked pleased, and said:

"That's a good cake, Bounce. Did your mother make it?"

"Like it, do you?" asked Billy, with a grin.

"Yes, first-class."

"Why don't you eat it all, then?"

"Well, it's a little too rich for me, and I'm afraid

I couldn't sleep after eating it."

"You ought to since it contains a soporific."

"Yes, soft-soap. Reminds me of home."

Billy Bounce looked at Johnny Brown and gurgled his surprise.

CHAPTER II.

The partnership formed by Johnny Brown and Billy Bounce was not confined to the two boys, by a good deal.

Others desired an interest in the firm of Johnny Brown & Co., and there were more applications than there were places.

Johnny and Billy were a whole team, a darky on the box and a dog under the wagon, so far as scaring up fun was concerned.

If Johnny couldn't think of a racket, Billy could, and contrarywise. Johnny would bring his wits to bear on a case that Billy would be stumped on.

There was no neglecting of studies, for all the fun there was, and it was generally a race between the two boys to see which would keep at the top.

Old Whiskers, as the boys called Simpson, was an especial favorite in the way of a mark for the boys' pranks, and many a high old racket did they play on him.

The cut of his sluggers, the set of his clothes and his general airishness were all commented upon and made the target for all sorts of jokes.

One afternoon, it being a warm day the teacher of English branches remained in his own particu-

lar school-room after hours looking over some exercises and fell asleep.

By a little adroitness he managed to fasten the ends of the sleeper's long whiskers to the back of his chair with the gum.

When the gum was persuaded a little it stuck tight, and Simpson's whiskers looked as though the wind were blowing through them with a vengeance.

"Ain't he a dandy?" thought Johnny as he stood and gazed at the slumbering beauty.

Then he took his bearings and noticed that there was a window just behind Simpson's desk, which opened on the lawn outside.

Master Johnny raised this without kicking up any fuss and then stole back to Simpson.

A piece of paper made a very convenient tickling machine, and Johnny titivated that dude teacher's nose up to the nines.

Solomon stood it for a time.

Then he gathered his breath for a regular old-fashioned sneeze and let drive.

That sneeze produced several results.

To begin with it gave Simpson's whiskers a stinging old tug.

It likewise fetched those big feet off that desk in a twinkling.

To wind up with the big arm chair went over backwards.

At the first alarm Johnny Brown went out the window.

When Simpson awoke he was sitting on the floor with his whiskers sticking right out straight in front of him.

The wind had evidently changed.

Johnny had imagined that his joke would result simply in giving those giddy whiskers a pull.

He had not expected quite such a hubbub.

"Howling jackasses, what's the matter?" exclaimed Simpson.

Then he caught sight of the open window behind him.

He had a big pail of water and a small portable pump, and was giving the wheels and axles a thorough gargling.

"Hallo, Old Rose," said Johnny, alluding to the runt's red locks.

"Go on neow," growled Pepper. "Don't be allus foolin'. Don't I allus treat yez white? Sure, it's white I am meself every day."

"Then you must be white Pepper instead of red," remarked Billy.

"If you got a crack in the eye, though, it would be black Pepper, wouldn't it?" added Johnny.

"Go on with yez," snarled the man, directing a stream of water under the body of the vehicle with one hand, while he worked the pump with the

There was a water-butt standing conveniently near.

Into this Pepper soused his empty bucket and got it full.

Then he set his pump to working.

Whack!

Billy Bounce got it in the neck.

Swash!

Johnny Brown had his hat knocked off by the crystal stream.

Pepper was by no means partial.

He gave it to both those boys alike.

It was good weather for Pepper just then.

"Hallo! it's raining!" cried Johnny, making a break.



"Ha, ha! I'll get ye all down, ye young scamps," chuckled Peter, "and then won't ye walk the plank!" Just then Peter shifted his peg so as to catch sight of more boys. That was Billy's chance.

"Well, no wonder I caught a—kerchew!—cold with that cork-screw fish-hooks window open—skersho!—behind me!" he ejaculated between his sneezes.

The wax had been obliged to let go of his whiskers, but the effect of the tussle showed itself in their position.

"Deuced odd I should fall asleep and sneeze myself—whew!—clean out of—whishoo—my chair," he remarked, picking himself up.

However, the spell was broken, the inclination to sleep was gone, and there was no more chance for a lark at present.

Johnny gave the thing away to his particular cronies, and they had a fine snort over it, but Simpson's fall out of his chair was the only tumble he took to the business.

Pepper, the fiery little gardener, made more fun than a little for the boys, and they were always ready to run him.

He had decided objections to having his name made a subject of jests, and for that reason the young scamps would ring the changes on it whenever they had a chance.

One day Johnny and Billy happened around the back of the house where Pepper was washing a carriage.

other. "Faix, I'm nayther red, nor black nor phwite Pepper at all."

"Yes, you are, and the right place for you is in the soup," chuckled Billy.

With that, young Bounce winked at Johnny and used some very expressive pantomime behind the sawed-off's back.

Johnny caught on like a little man.

He winked back at Billy, and both gave a spring.

In two seconds Pepper was in the soup.

That is to say, he was in the water bucket.

Those boys had tripped up his heels and sent him head first into the water in a jiffy.

"Now he's green Pepper," asserted Johnny; "pretty green, too, or he wouldn't have let us get the bulge on him like that."

Pepper and pail both went over, the water running, Pepper rolling.

Then up he jumped, as mad as the hare of March.

"Begorrah, I'll get the lar an ye," he sputtered. "It's 'sa'lt and batther, that's phwat it is."

"Well, you need salting pretty bad," said Billy.

Then he and Johnny turned their backs on that hot Pepper.

That's where they were very unwise.

Billy turned around to see what the fuss was about.

Pepper was still working the pump.

Billy got it in the mouth and nearly went over backward.

He thought he could rush in on Pepper and turn the tables on him.

Pepper was too strong for him that time.

Pepper and water, rather, got the best of it.

Billy found this out at the next stroke of the pump.

He was nearly washed away.

A clever retreat is better than a foolish attack.

That's what Billy thought as he got away.

"Aha-ha-ha, yez got the worst av it that time, didn't yez, me lads," laughed Pepper. "Wather is as good a wippin' for wan as for another."

"We'll have to get square on his auburn-haired giblets for that," remarked Johnny.

He and Billy were now out of range.

"Yes," said Master Bounce, "it'll never do to let that fellow with the vermillion locks boast that he got the best of Johnny Brown & Co."

"Bet your slippers."

"How are we going to manage it?"

"I'll show you," chuckled Johnny. "We'll work

an old gag on him, but he won't know whether it's new or old till after he bites."

"What is it?"

Johnny whispered a few words in his partner's ear.

"Immense," said young Bounce.

Then those two champion jokers went off and procured a pail which they filled with water.

They then balanced it on the sill of a window just over the side door of the school building.

To the handle they fastened two ropes.

One of these was short, was secured by putting down the window and would allow the pail to just turn over.

The other rope was long and went down to the door, passing over the top and being fastened to the knob inside.

Do you catch on?

Well, when this little apparatus was all arranged one of the boys was instructed to go and tell Pepper that Blodgett wanted him immediately.

Sam Berries was the boy, and he did his errand with the utmost diplomacy.

In the first place he approached Pepper with the utmost courtesy.

He didn't rush up in a hurry, call Pepper a red-headed runt, and tell him to go up to old Blodgett in a jiffy or he'd get thumped.

Instead of doing thusly, which would have knocked the scheme into a cocked hat, he did thus:

He walked up quietly, tipped his hat, and said with the utmost suavity:

"Mr. Pepper, Mr. Blodgett would like to see you at the side door at your earliest convenience."

This style of address tickled Pepper down to the ground.

"Begorrah, that's the way to speak to a mon," he muttered. "Faix, I'd think they wor only foolin' me if the bye wasn't so p'lite abeout it."

Then up went Pepper to the school-house.

He forgot the side door, however, and went in at the main entrance.

Maybe you think that spoiled the job.

Well, it did not.

There are several ways of killing a cat.

Johnny Brown was up to snuff.

The moment he saw Pepper go in at the front door he sent Sam after him.

Pepper was looking all over for Blodgett and not finding him, when Sam came along and said:

"You idiot, why don't you go to the side door as I told you? You're a big chump."

That made Pepper mad.

He started after Sam, who hoofed it to the loaded door.

He let Pepper get almost up to him, and then suddenly yanked the door open.

Pepper went out a-flying, while Sam stayed behind the door.

Down came that pailful of water right on top of the gardener.

He was drenched.

A peal of laughter from a dozen boys, including Johnny and Billy, stationed outside, assured him that he was sold as well.

"Tally one for us," cried Johnny, and Pepper went back to the barn, convinced that Johnny Brown & Co. were a little too many for him.

While the boys at Blodgett's were having lots of fun, there was one fellow who was both ready and willing to give them all the trouble he could.

This was Peter Pilgrim, the wooden legged janitor.

He was a mean old duffer, and hated the boys because they did not think him of more importance than old Blodgett or Simpson.

He was all the time nagging them, and no decent lot of boys will stand that.

From nagging, however, he got to bearing tales.

One day the boys were amusing themselves by pitching pennies in the playground.

They weren't doing it for keeps, mind, but just for the fun of it.

They all had spending money enough without chiseling coppers out of each other.

Well, old stumptoes saw them at it.

He was always nosing about looking for something to blab about, and this was just slapjacks and honey to him.

It gave him a chance to tell on the boys and that was just what he wanted.

He knew well enough that Johnny, Billy, and the rest were not gambling, but that made no odds.

Away he went to see old Baldy, and said that he had found some of the boys pitching pennies.

He wasn't satisfied with that, the old chump.

What must he do but say that he had heard that they played cards for money, as well.

It's awfully easy to credit a rumor to "I've heard so," without compromising yourself.

That's what Peter did.

He did not say outright that the boys had been gambling at cards, but he made Blodgett think they had.

That put the old man on his ear at once.

The very next day he gave the boys hallelujah.

"It is reported to me," he said sternly, "that many of the boys in this institution pitch pennies, plays cards, throw dice, and otherwise gamble for money, and I have the names of several of the more prominent offenders. If I hear of these offenses being repeated the boys will be expelled."

He was just fool enough to believe what that old gossip told him.

That didn't make it any better for the boys, however.

They were hopping mad, and were ready for anything.

"It's one of old Wooden Leg's lies," said Johnny Brown.

"I saw him sneaking about the day we were pitching pennies," added Sam.

"We'll fix him for that," chuckled Billy Bounce. "Just you leave the thing to us."

When the firm of Johnny Brown & Co. took up anything you could rely upon it being put through

Johnny and Billy put their noddles together and cooked up a dandy snap on Pegtoes.

That afternoon when school was out a dozen or twenty of the boys got together on the playground.

They drew a circle on the sand and stood around it, pretending to pitch pennies.

As a matter of fact, not one of them had a copper in his hand.

That was the bait which was to lure Peter to the spot.

All hands appeared terribly excited, and none of them looked away from the ring.

They shouted and made bets and seemed very much interested in the game.

Johnny and Billy laid low in the bushes waiting for Peter to appear.

Billy had a long, stout rope, with a slip noose on the end, tucked under his jacket.

What this was for will be seen later on.

All that noise could not fail to attract Peter's attention.

The boys were up to some mischief, he was sure.

He therefore stumped out of the cellar, where he was at work, and hurried toward the playground.

I may not have mentioned it before, but old Peter Pilgrim was terribly nearsighted.

Without his glasses he could not tell a calf from a fence post at ten yards.

When he put on those big iron-rimmed goggles of his, however, he could see better than most folks.

"H'm! up to some games, the young vagabonds, I'll warrant!" growled Peter, putting on his specs.

Then he stumped over to the playground as fast as he could hoof it, taking out a big pencil and a note-book as he went.

"I'll catch 'em for sure this time, the young pirates," he grunted, "and get their names, and make 'em sweat if they don't give me somethin' fur keepin' quiet."

"That's my game," cried one of the boys.

"Bet you a dollar it isn't."

"Chuck over; it's a tie."

"How much did you win?"

"How much did you?"

The boys were evidently doing some reckless playing.

They crowded all in a heap and yelled like fiends.

Old Peter got right behind them, without them knowing anything about it.

"I've got you now, my bucks," he growled, scribbling down the names on his book.

The boys appeared to be completely absorbed in their game.

They were only waiting for the signal, however.

Peter, in his haste to get all the names down, never thought of looking behind him.

Johnny and Billy had come out of their hiding place after giving the boys the tip that old Timberheel was coming.

They were now sneaking up behind that spying old curmudgeon with the stillness of mice.

The other boys in the plot made so much noise anyhow, that they might have walked like elephants and not be noticed.

Billy had the rope already mentioned in his hand, and was waiting for a good chance to throw it.

Johnny sneaked right up behind Peter, so as to give his partner some help.

"Ha, ha, I'll get ye all down, ye young scamps," chuckled Peter, "and then won't ye walk the plank!"

Just then Peter shifted his peg so as to catch sight of more boys.

That was Billy's chance.

He gave the noose a fling, so that when Peter planted his peg again it went inside the loop.

Then Johnny gave it a yank so as to tighten it.

"Now, then!" he yelled.

CHAPTER III.

"Now, then," yelled Johnny, "haul away all together!"

Johnny had fastened a slip-knot around the end of Peter Pilgrim's wooden leg.

At the word, he and Billy gave the rope a yank, and down came the old sailor.

Peter had been spying on a lot of the boys, whom he supposed to be pitching pennies.

He had on his glasses, and was putting their names down in a note-book.

It was all a put-up job on old Pegtoes.

The boys weren't pitching pennies at all.

They were pretending to do so in order to lure Peter into the trap set for him.

When Johnny and Billy hauled on the rope, down went Peter on his back, his note-book flying one way, his big, iron-bound spectacles the other.

Then, of a sudden, the boys forgot all interest in their game.

They turned quickly about and came rushing forward.

Then they laid hold of the rope in a jiffy. There was room enough on it for all hands.

"Let her hustle!" cried Johnny. Then away went the whole gang across the playground.

Peter was dragged along on his back, his good leg and his arms waving about frantically.

All hands on deck!" he bawled. "Keep to your stations, you mutinous lubbers."

Away he went, over the grass and gravel.

"Stand by, confound you. Belay, I tell you."

Now and then he clutched convulsively at a clump of grass to stay his progress.

"Avast there, you lubbers. Stow that, can't you?"

Even nautical phrases could not stop those scurrying boys.

The way that wooden-legged chump was dragged over the ground beat an express train.

Now and then he tried to dig his good heel into the ground and call a halt.

He only got an extra bump whenever he did so.

"Belay that!" he roared, thinking of his old sailor days.

The boys didn't belay anything.

In fact, they let out more line.

Peter's clothes were a sight to behold.

The boys were not at all particular where they hauled him.

Mud, grass, gravel or cobbles, it was all the same to them.

Peter's coat was up around his ears, and his breeches needed half soling bad.

The more the boys hauled him around the madder he got.

Perhaps he wouldn't try to spy on them after this.

"I'll report you all, you insubordinate young villains," he gasped.

The threat was an idle one.

Without his specs he couldn't tell one boy from another.

Unless he put down the name of every boy in the school he could not catch the right ones.

The boys knew this and they hauled him clear to the end of the playground.

It was pretty rough treatment, but I think you'll say it served the old duffer just right.

Out of breath, covered with dust, sweat, and mud, the old sailor could no longer yell or make any effort to stop himself.

There came a let up sooner than he expected.

The rope, from constant chafing on the rough gravel, finally snapped in two.

Down went the boys in a heap.

Peter's rough ride had come to an end at last.

For all that, he was not satisfied.

He limped to his feet and began to abuse the boys in good old-fashioned sailor talk.

Hard words break no bones, however.

The boys scrambled to their feet as soon as they could, and made themselves scarce.

They didn't want to be identified with the racket any longer.

"Guess he won't blab on us any more."

"Bet he can't tell who worked this racket on him."

Pepper saw something of the rush, and rather enjoyed it than otherwise.

The housekeeper, Mrs. Dodger, had long since scoured on Pegtoes, and it was of no use to go to her for consolation.

There was no satisfaction in complaining to Blodgett either, since he could not tell who had given him that free ride across the campus.

"Bust my lee scuppers, but I'll get square with them yo'ng pirates," growled Peter, as he stumped around in the cellar that evening. "If the furnace was a-going I'd kill 'em all with coal gas, see if I wouldn't."

There was no doubt that he would try and pay

fled the big bell so that it would not ring ahead the next morning.

That gave them an extra half hour, as it took Peter that long to fix things, and of course they would not go until the bell rang.

It was between Pegtoes and the boys, in fact, and a war in which no quarter was given.

Peter's next move was to throw a lot of rubbish into the well, and then charge the boys themselves as having done it.

One chap got a licking on Peter's complaint because a ball belonging to him had been found in the well.

Of course the boys were bound to settle accounts with Peter for that.

goin' to foind eout the names av them phwat do be doin' it."

"Oh, he is, eh?"

"Yis, sor, and I'd advise yez to be quite for wan or two noights, and chate the murderin' spy out av his tale tellin'."

"Much obliged to you, Pepper," said Johnny. "Peter told me you were cranky, but I don't believe it."

"Oh, he did?" growled the gardener.

"Yes, and that you ate meat on Friday."

"Oh, the robber."

"And that you'd rob a church."

"May the ould bye fly away wid him, and take



Peter was dragged along on his back, his good leg and his arms waving about frantically. "All hands on deck!" he bawled. "Keep to your stations, you mutinous lubbers." Away he went, over the grass and gravel. "Stand by, confound you. Belay, I tell you." Now and then he clutched convulsively at a clump of grass to stay his progress.

back the boys for the way they had hustled him about.

The boys were by no means alarmed, however.

They considered themselves equal to old Hickory Heel any day in the week, from Sunday to Saturday.

They were ahead now and could afford to wait for Stumptoes to make the next move.

The latter did not say anything to the principal or professors about it, however.

He knew it would not do him any good.

He could get hunk in other ways, he thought.

He raised no end of a dust in the cellar, just as the cook was serving up breakfast.

As a result, the boys ate a pretty good share of their allotted peck of dirt that morning.

Then he had three or four loads of fertilizer dumped right under the dormitory windows.

The smell might be healthful, but it was certainly strong enough to stop the school clock.

After that the old tyke began to ring the assembling bell ten minutes ahead of time and give the signal for dismissing just as much late.

When the boys tumbled to this they made a counter move.

Johnny and Billy got into the belfry and muf-

They set upon him in a body, knocked off his specs, let him down the well in a bucket and kept him there until his teeth nearly fell out with the cold.

Thus the war was waged, and with little let up.

"Begorra, thims the byes phwat can get the best av the one-legged omadham," observed Pepper, who had no liking for Peter, "and it's me phwat won't be sorry to see the vilyan come up wid."

Peter generally stumped it around the house the last thing at night to see that all was quiet.

Being in search of something to bring against the boys, he told Blodgett that they sat up after hours and made a disturbance generally.

"You must find out the particular ones who break the rules," said Blodgett, "and report them to me."

Now, the boys had as a rule been as quiet as mice after hours, for the very good and sufficient reason that they were fast asleep.

Pepper, who had had a fuss with Pegtoes, called Johnny into the garden one day and said:

"The man wid the wooden leg has been tellin' the master that ye do be makin' no ind av a nise in yer rooms av a noight aither hours, an' he's

him to a place phwere the wooden leg 'll be burned off him," growled Pepper.

Johnny was up to Pepper, as well as snuff.

If he could keep Pepper in a state of wrath against Peter the cranky gardener might be made use to the boys in their warfare with Peter.

"I'll saw the canbogue's wooden leg in two some night," declared Pepper, "and whin he walks he'll fall and break the nose av um, the maraudher, and serve him right for tellin' lies on me."

Johnny and the boys did not take Pepper's advice about keeping quiet for a night or two.

On the contrary, they determined to make a regular hullabaloo, and just at the time when the janitor was going his rounds.

That was to coax him into a trap they had set for him.

It was literally a trap, and a good big one, too, with a powerful spring and good strong jaws.

Something must be done to teach old Stumpyjack good manners, and the boys wished he might get a good nip for once.

They set the trap, which had been used for catching foxes at one time, and stuck it in a dark corner at the end of the hall.

One of the boys was put to watch for Peter and give timely warning of his coming.

The moment that his peculiar tread was heard on the stairs the word was passed.

Then the boys got together in a room at the foot of the passage and began to raise Cain.

They sang, they danced, and they cut up generally.

Peter heard the racket and snorted, as does the war horse when he sniffs the battle afar off.

Peter Pilgrim smelled revenge and was greatly pleased.

The boys were up to mischief and he would catch them in the act.

That would be pipes and tobacco to him.

His wooden leg fairly twinkled as he stumped it down the hall.

Two good legs could not have carried him any faster than did his team of misfits.

He located the sound and would have opened the door in another second when—

Snap!

He was caught in a trap.

For once the plans of the boys had miscarried.

At least there was a slight change in the programme of arrangements.

The wooden leg got in the trap instead of the good one.

Somehow or other they had overlooked this possibility.

At all events it showed the timber-legged spy that the boys were waiting for him.

The jaws of the trap held his wooden peg fast and he could not reach down to take it off.

He had to stomp away with it on his leg, clanking and rattling at every step.

"Catch me in a trap, will they, hey, the sojerin', lubbers? This'll get to the old man's ears, this will. They ain't satisfied with draggin' me five miles through mud and bushes, but now they want to break my leg, the land sharks."

The boys were all as quiet as could be now, taking in what the old crab was saying.

He couldn't go clamping about with that thing on his foot and expect to catch anybody unaware.

As well might a cat with a bell on its neck expect to catch rats.

"Split my royal boom! if this thing isn't a nuisance," grunted Peter, clumping back toward the stairs.

You could hear the old thing rattle at every step he took.

There was a chain on it, and that, dragging along the floor, made things worse.

There was no use in his trying to get the thing off his wooden leg the way matters stood.

He would have to wait till he unstrapped the leg for that.

Consequently, he would have to lug the trap with him till he got to his room.

As that was on the ground floor of the building, one can imagine the picnic he was getting.

Away he went, clumping along, while the boys were ready to explode with suppressed laughter.

Clump—clump—clump!

It was all right till he reached the floor below.

This was where the professors were asleep in their little beds.

As Peter went clumping and grunting along the hall to the next flight, the noise awoke Simpson, or Whiskers, as the boys had dubbed him familiarly.

He thought that some of the students were up to a lark.

There was a remedy for that right in his room, and he determined to apply it.

The remedy was a full-blown rattan six feet long and a big, twisted handle on one end of it.

Whiskers knew where it was without lighting a lamp.

He got up, seized the switch and sailed out into the hall.

A stumping figure, carrying a light and rattling a chain, was coming his way.

"H'm! old-fashioned ghost joke," muttered Simpson. "I'll take the nonsense out of him."

Then he made a dash for the mysterious figure.

Whack! whack!

Pegtoes got two solid cracks with the big rattan before he knew where he was.

He dropped his candle on the floor and set up a howl.

Then he was in the same predicament as Moses when the light went out.

"Scuttle and sink the lot of ye," he roared, "if I don't put ye in irons for this, I'll know the reason!"

"Hallo, Pilgrim! are you here too?" asked Simpson. "Did you catch it?"

"Did I catch it?" snorted Peter. "Well, I should say I did catch it. I'll get even with the young miffs for this. They won't put any more indignities on me, I tell you."

"Well, if you caught it, why did you hold on to it, you idiot?"

"How in the name o' reason can I hold on to a

cut across the back? It's held on to me ever since."

Then the professor of English branches took a drop.

It was Peter Pilgrim that he had larruped.

"Why, you weren't the ghost with the clanking chain and the glimmering light, were you?" he asked.

"Ghost be keelhauled!" growled Peter. "I ain't no ghost. I got my leg caught in a trap and I had to lug it along with me."

That seemed very funny to Solomon Simpson.

He gave a snort, then a giggle and after that a regular guffaw.

"That's a good one on me," he chuckled, "takin' a janitor for a ghost, ha-ha-ho-ho!"

"If you'll give me a light, I'll go on to my room and turn in for my watch below," growled Peter.

"Oh, you left your watch below, did you?" giggled the professor of English branches. "Well, you seem pretty well wound up yourself."

He thought it a good joke, and was ready to make puns about it all night.

However, he went for a match and relighted Peter's candle.

"Oh, I see," he remarked. "Well, hold your peg still, and I'll take the thing off."

Then he took the trap off, nearly getting his fingers caught in it while he was doing so, by the way.

After that the janitor stumped back to bed, and Simpson retired, chuckling over the good joke on Peter until he fell asleep.

The next day the wooden-limbed janitor was mad enough.

He would have liked to report the whole school as skylarking after hours, but that would have seemed too thin for any one to hold on his stomach.

Besides that he knew that Simpson was a great joker, and would greatly enjoy telling the story of the Trap, the Rattan and the Wooden Leg, freely translated from the Hebrew.

He would be sure to do so, if Peter went to telling too big a fairy tale on the boys.

In short, Simpson did not think much more of Peter than did the boys.

He did not come so much in contact with the old crank, to be sure, but he considered him a duffer, nevertheless.

Peter, therefore, said nothing about the little racket of the night previous, but was more than ever resolved to square things with the boys.

He knew they would be on the lookout for him, however, and so he concluded to wait a few days before compassing his revenge.

A day or so after this there came on a spell of windy weather, just the sort to fly kites in.

Now, Johnny and Billy were not averse to flying kites, if the aerial travelers were only big enough.

When they went in for any fun of this sort, they wanted it to be worth their while.

You could not put them off with anything ordinary in the sky-flying line.

They did not care very much for the Japanese variety either.

A gaudy thing with wings and a hideous face, which had a tendency to go thumping on its side every second minute despite the length of tail it carried, had no attractions for them.

No, sir.

They wanted an American kite, big and spread-eagle like, similar to the country they were proud to hail from.

There being none of that sort in town, those two bully boys proceeded to build one to their fancy.

They made it seven feet high and four wide at the biggest part.

Then they covered it with newspapers in order to give the current news a wide circulation.

They had forty feet of tail and used a clothes line to fly the monster with.

All hands went out on the playground in the afternoon to see the big fellow go up.

The end of the line was fastened to a fence, as the boys had no desire to take a trip to the planets known or unknown.

They got it up and were holding on to the line, feeling it tug in their hand, twenty or thirty feet of slack line trailing on the ground behind them.

The whole gang of boys stood around enjoying the fun of seeing such a huge kite sailing in the air, when along came Stumbley, with a sneer on his ugly mug and his black beard sticking straight out in scorn.

Nobody paid any attention to him at first.

Then he stumped up and stood with the unused line between his good leg and his wooden extension.

Pretty soon Billy gazed over his shoulder and took in the situation.

He gave Johnny an expressive wink and signaled to him to drop the line.

Both boys let her go and jumped back.

Alas for Peter!

The kite gave a bound, the extra line paid out, and up went Pegtoes, with the prospect of going to the moon at express train speed.

CHAPTER IV.

The sudden springing up of the kite line under Peter Pilgrim's feet, alive and wooden, caused the crabbed old snoozer to take an unexpected rise in the world.

Up he flew like a cork out of a champagne bottle.

He did not go very far, of course, but he went quite high enough to satisfy even his cranky mind.

The first thing he did was to grab hold of the kite line and hang on like grim death.

The boys thought it was fun alive to see him.

Johnny and Billy did not let it stop there, however.

They suddenly cut the line, which had been secured to a fence post.

It parted with a snap and flew around and around like lightning.

It wound around Peter's good leg, likewise his wooden one, and got all snarled up in a jiffy.

The kite took a sudden soar and carried Peter five or six feet in the air.

The wind was rising, and so was Pegtoes.

The latter was rather too heavy for that kite to carry as a steady load.

Down he came with a bump on the hard ground.

Before he could unfasten the line he was lifted up again and went sailing over the play-ground at a great rate.

"Avast there!" he bawled. "Belay that, can't you?"

Down he came again with a dull thud on a big stone.

Dull thuds had ceased to be popular just then.

"Stow that, you lubbers!" yelled the ex-boat-swain. "Pipe all hands and untie me!"

The wind got under the kite, gave it a lift and up went Peter again.

That's the way it was clear across the playground.

It was up and down, up and down, as regular as clock work.

First the wind would raise him five or six feet and then his own weight would fetch him back again.

Every time he struck he came down with the force of a spile driver.

Sometimes he would bounce and then again the kite would yank him up.

It was as funny as a coon hunt to a darky—to the boys.

Peter failed to see the joke of it.

The wind began to blow great guns by this time. Peter was rapidly approaching the fence that surrounded the grounds.

Upon this fence he pinned his hopes of rescue. If he could only catch hold of it, he would be all hunk.

If he could!

Fate and the wind decreed otherwise.

Old Boreas got in one of his strongest puffs just before Peter reached the fence.

Over it he went like a feather and never touched it.

The boys hurried after him, for they wanted to see the sport.

"Hold on tight, Pete!" cried Johnny Brown.

"We'll save you yet, if we break a leg," added Billy Bounce.

Oh, yes, they were awfully anxious to save him.

The wind and the kite took Peter over a newly plowed field.

Every time he bumped he left his impressions of the country behind him.

He carried considerable sail with him, besides. And the wind continued to blow for all it was worth.

Over the fields, leaping stone walls, rail-fences and dry ditches went the unhappy Pilgrim.

Such a pilgrimage hadn't been heard of before.

"Let me loose, you lubbers!" roared the janitor, as he tried to grab hold of fences, bushes, stones and whatever else came in his way.

The boys went racing after him, eager to rescue their beloved old friend.

Somehow, however, the wind seemed to be too strong for them.

Perhaps it was and perhaps not.

At all events, they did not catch Peter.

Finally he hopped over a fence, slid down an embankment and struck the turnpike.

It was a dandy rough road, and the wind blew in the very direction it ran.

Bumpety-bump, see-saw up and down, and still ahead went poor Peter.

A man driving a flock of sheep was presently overtaken.

The sheep said "Bah" to that sort of business, and scattered in all directions.

The man was sent flying into the ditch by the rambunctious rams and remained there.

Peter's kite did not give him any rest, however.

We may remark just here that the wind was still blowing.

Along came a man driving an ox-cart.

Even such stolid, slow, and easy "critters" as oxen couldn't stand any such racket.

The sight of a man bumping and bowling along the road like that was quite too much for their equanimity.

They gave a snort and a roar, started on the dead run, went up the bank, through some bars ("a pair of bars" it always is, we believe), smash-

Please remember that the wind kept on blowing.

Pretty soon he passed a farm-house, and all hands came out to see what was up.

The pigs ran squealing to their pens, the calves bellowed as calves best know how, the ducks and chickens went squawking and fluttering to their roosts, and pandemonium was turned adrift.

Out rushed a lot of dogs, big and little, and gave chase.

The farmer's three sons, the two hired men, the next-door neighbor's sons, and several that lived further off, all came racing along.

Peter struck the ground with a bump, and a big bull-dog made a dash for his trailing coat-tails.

the two boys got so mixed up that the farmer himself couldn't tell t'other from which till he kicked what he thought was the dog and it hollered instead of barking.

The release of the heavy drag on Peter's rear extension did wonders for that weary Pilgrim.

The kite shot forty feet up in the air like a balloon when you throw out the ballast.

Then the wind grabbed it and sent it clear to the top of a tall tree in the middle of a field, ten yards away.

That was a rise in the world, you'd better believe.

The wind was still blowing, and it carried great clouds of dust with it.



Horatio! how the wind was blowing! The kite pulled Peter and the dog right along. Nothing but a crowbar between his teeth would make that bull-pup let go. He dug his feet into the soil, and tried to hang back, but it was of no use.

ed the wagon to bits, dumped the man at the side of the road and kept on running.

Unless they have been stopped by this time they are running yet.

The next thing Peter met was two old maids out for a drive in a buggy.

The horse, warranted gentle and kind and all that, got rattled, took the bit between his teeth and hooked it for home the best he knew.

Did I say that the wind was blowing harder yet?

Well, it was.

The big kite tugged at the line like a steam engine.

Now it would sail clean up into the sky, and Peter would get a tremendous rise.

Then it would plunge down as if it meant to drive a hole clean through to China.

That's the time Peter would catch it.

How his old bones did suffer on those occasions.

Bump!

"Odd rot the dash blasted kite to Jericho!"

That's only a sample of what he said.

He never stopped on the ground long enough to allow him to untangle the line.

It was twisted about him worse and worse, and in a perfect snarl.

He got 'em in his teeth and hung on.

Horatio! how the wind was blowing!

The kite pulled Peter and the dog right along.

Nothing but a crowbar between his teeth would make that bull-pup let go.

He dug his feet into the soil, and tried to hang back, but it was of no use.

The farmer's boy grabbed him by the tail and tried to stop him.

That festive youth was plowing up the dirt with his nose the next minute.

He did not let go, though, any more than the purp.

How they did scud.

The next oldest boy seized his brother's legs and tried to stop his rapid progress.

The kite yanked him along, too.

You can bet it was blowing a tornado.

There was no knowing how many more would have been dragging at the end of that kite line if something had not happened.

Peter's coat tails went all to everlasting bust.

They were never built to stand any such strain as that.

Consequently they dissolved partnership with the coat.

The dog went rolling over and over and he and

The clouds were black and ugly-looking besides.

Blodgett's boys knew what to expect.

Rain was coming, and no small amount, either. The way those boys broke for cover was amazing to witness.

The rest of the gang did likewise.

And all this time poor Peter Pilgrim was literally up a tree.

He clung despairingly to the branches which swayed and bent under his weight most frightfully.

Now he was glad he had the kite there.

It would assist him in getting to the ground.

At least that's what he fondly imagined.

That kite had done enough business for one day. Moreover, it soon began to rain cats and dogs.

It was a second deluge.

Johnny Brown & Co. had reached shelter none too soon.

The rain came down with tropical vigor.

No ordinary kite could stand any such wetting. Even the big fellow, strong as it was, had to knock under.

In three minutes, the covering of that skyscraper was flying about in bits like a flock of big white birds.

No kite can float without paper any more than a business man can.

Consequently that one went tumbling to the ground all broken up.

Peter was left hanging to the top of the tree in the rain.

That rain was gotten up for business purposes, and it attended strictly to business.

It rained as if it hadn't done so in a month, and did not expect to do so for another month, and was bound to make the most of its chances.

It didn't come down in drops, it came in barrels.

Peter felt just like the old sailor in the storm when the great waves were rolling over him, that is to say, very wet.

He didn't have a dry rag on him inside of two minutes.

The water ran down his neck and out at his shoes in rivers.

His pockets bulged out with the rain in them, and his shoes were nearly washed off his feet.

It was a wonder that his wooden leg wasn't sent afloat by the way the aqueous fluid ran down it.

And all the time the limbs were bending and tossing like mad in the wind.

The poor old duffer did not dare to let go with one hand for fear he could not hold on by the other.

Finally he managed to slide down several feet and get a firmer grip.

After that it wasn't such tough work.

The tangled vine interfered somewhat with his progress, but by little and little he got half way down and then stopped to rest in the crotch of two big limbs.

He got out a knife, knocked the nonsense out of his line, and then went on down.

All this time it kept on raining, and you couldn't see for the blinding sheets of water that came dashing down.

That unfortunate Pilgrim couldn't get any wetter, and so he concluded to grin and bear it.

He stumped it toward the nearest farm house, however, as fast as he could go.

Not having on his glasses, however, he was at a disadvantage.

He struck a soft spot with his wooden leg and went in a foot or more.

In trying to haul the wooden foot out of the bog, he got his good one in.

Then he had to haul on both of them, and in getting himself free fell on his back.

That was bad enough, but it wasn't all.

He had to get over a stone wall in order to make a short cut to the house.

The wall was never intended for people to climb.

The minute Peter got on top of it down it went altogether.

Poor Peter got a tremendous shaking up that time. Then a big stone fell on his wooden leg and held him down.

He yelled and kicked and called for help, all in vain.

Finally a bright thought struck him like a stone going through a skylight.

He lifted the stone off his stump, and was free.

Then he made for that farm-house at his liveliest.

Floundering through puddles, stumping through mud and slush, stumbling over stone heaps and getting scratched by briars he finally reached shelter.

He imagined that he would find the boys there, and would discover the identity of his tormentors at last.

There's where he got left.

The Boomers had not been to the house at all.

They had struck another one, half a mile nearer home.

The hapless Pilgrim was just about done up with fatigue.

He sat down on the sheltered side of the farm-house porch and let the water drain off him.

If he had gone inside, the house would have been flooded.

Finally the farmer's wife allowed him to go in and sit by the kitchen fire.

Meanwhile it had stopped raining and the sun came out bright and beautiful.

Peter did not find it out till he was nearly roasted with the heat.

His clothes were steaming, and he was having a regular Turkish bath time of it.

By the time he had discovered that the sun was out the boys had nearly reached the institute.

Consequently Peter did not tumble to them.

When he came into the grounds, looking as if he had been through the wars, all hands were playing away and having a dandy time.

"The young pirates!" growled Peter. "I'll have that play-ground plowed up and planted in turnips as sure as I say it."

The boys did not pay the slightest attention to him, and he stumped off, madder than ever.

If they had made fun of him it would have given self.

him a chance to stop and abuse them, but they did not even see him, or so it appeared.

Off he went, while the boys continued to enjoy themselves, shouting and laughing at a great rate.

"I'll get square with the young buccaneers," muttered Peter as he stumped it indoors, "and don't you fail to remember it."

The boys were one ahead on rackets, however, and could afford to wait for him to catch up.

Three or four days after the kite incident the boys were all out on the lawn after school hours, doing their best to drive dull care away, when along came Pepper, leading a calf at the end of a rope.

"Get on to Pepper's brother!" cried one of the boys.

"Does he sleep with you, Pepper?" asked another.

"Don't they look alike, though?" remarked some one else.

"Be kind to your little brother, Pepper," sang out Johnny.

Then the calf made a remark.

"He says 'Rats,' fellows," said Billy.

"Come on, neow, an' don't be bla'ting like that," muttered Pepper, hauling on the rope.

The young bovine objected to going any further just then.

He planted his fore feet, each at a different angle, and lifted up his voice in protestation.

"Come on, I tell yez," blustered Pepper, giving the beast a belt with the end of the rope.

"Don't hit your brother like that, Pepper," said Johnny. "How can you be so cruel?"

"Go on with yez, an' don't be givin' me lip," growled Pepper, hauling on the rope.

"Let's give him a lift, boys," cried Billy Bounce.

Then all hands rushed at that calf.

They sent him spinning out of that in a jiff.

He went so sudden that Pepper was upset on the grass.

He held on to the rope, though.

The calf, having once started, was bound to keep it up.

How he did gambol over the greensward!

You can gamble on it yourself that he did.

The boys had something to do with his friskiness, perhaps.

One would go at him on one side, and he would jump aside and start off on a run.

Then another would jump on him at that side and cause him to take another tack.

Here again he would meet another boy and change his course in consequence.

Pepper kept hold of the rope in the vain attempt to hold in that young beef producer.

Every time he would stagger to his feet the calf would give a dash in an unexpected direction, and down would go Peter on his back.

The thing was kept up till Pepper was mad as a hatter.

"Ge an thin and take care av the clumsy baste-
versilf thin," he growled, throwing down the rope.

Then he went off in a white heat towards the garden.

The boys soon captured the calf, and Billy remarked:

"Let's keep him, fellows. We can have a dandy snap with him."

Then they gave that young animal some milk and tender grass and all that sort of thing till he was quite contented.

Pepper saw no more of him, for the boys smuggled him out o' sight.

"I don't care phwat they do wid him, faix," he growled, "so long as I'm not bothered wid um. Troth, they can take him to bed wid um av they like."

That was not exactly what the boys did.

They worked up a dandy snap with that calf, however, and don't you forget it.

That night—not very late, for he was an early bird, from the nature of his occupation—when Pepper went up to his room to go to bed the light he carried suddenly went out.

"Faix, the wind is hoigh the night," he mused, "and that surprises me."

That wasn't the only surprise he was to get.

CHAPTER V.

PEPPER was going to bed.

On the way his light went out.

That was a surprise.

There were more coming.

The above written in the style of the gifted Walt Whitman shows you how things stand.

"Begob, I won't bother to light up agin," said Pepper, "since the moon do be shinin' so foine."

Then he proceeded to his room in the dark.

Strange sounds greeted his ears as he went on.

Groans, muffled cries, hushed shrieks, and stealthy footsteps were heard.

"Begob, av I was asily alarummed I might think the place war full av spooks," he observed to himself.

Then he went on, and as he did so the groans increased.

He had to go up three flights of stairs, and at every flight the noises increased.

Things went flying past his head in the dark, and the wind howled and whistled in the strangest manner.

Obstructions lay in his path, and he stumbled over them with great frequency.

By the time he reached the top of the house he was in a state of considerable nervousness.

"I'm blowed av I can undhershtand it at all!" he muttered, beginning to tremble. "Something must be goin' to happen. There's no one I know av all me relations that's loikely to die except me sister-in-law's cousin's husband, phwat is noinety year old and as strhong as a bullock."

When he got into his room everything was dark.

He fell over a trunk in getting to the window, and the groans increased.

"It's a warnin' sure, and some wan av them I know will die before mornin'. It's a bad soign to fall over a thrunk."

He was trembling like the mischief when he raised the window, threw back the blinds and let in a flood of light.

"Faix, I don't know phwat ails me at all. I were never cut up so since me fayther died a month before I wor born."

He went to the bed and turned down the covers.

Horror of horrors!

A hairy form lay between the sheets, and an awful voice demanded:

"What's that?"

At least that's what Peter thought it sounded like.

"Howly saints and martyrs defnd us!" he gasped as he fell rather than leaped back from the bed.

Again that awful voice repeated its question.

The red-headed runt did not stop to answer.

He uttered one blood-curdling yell and dashed out of the room.

A peal of fiendish laughter followed him.

He thought it was fiendish at all events.

At any rate it rattled him completely.

He was out of the room and at the head of the stairs in a moment.

Then he went rolling rapidly, like the river Iser, and never stopped until he fetched up at the bottom.

Some more eldritch shrieks greeted his ears as he picked himself up.

That got him all wound up and rattled.

He fled like a frightened thing, and never stopped until he collided with Peter on the lowest landing.

"Awast, there, ye lubber!" the old sailor roared.

"Can't ye see where yer going?"

"Oh, murther, Misther Pether, it's kilt I am," wailed Pepper.

"Well, I should say ye was putty jolly and alive, the way ye bump into a man," snarled Pegtoes.

"Ye most knocked me off my pins."

"Oh, I'm goin' to die, I'm goin' to die, I know I am, I've had an awful warnin' av it. The devil is in me bed, so he is."

"The deuce you say!" exclaimed Peter.

"Yis, sor, I said so. Oh, murther, phwat a fright he gev me. Send for the docthor and let me make me will."

"Belay there, shipmit!" roared Peter. "Give us the reckonin' o' this here thing and p'raps we can get it straight."

"The house is haunted, there's ghosts on every landin', an' I found won in me bed, a great hairy divil wid a vice on him like a fog horn, and he axed me phwero wor I goin'."

"Awast, I tell you," said the old salt. "They ain't no sich things as ghosts."

"It's well enough for ye to say that as never saw anny, but I cam' from Ireland and I know better," groaned Pepper. "There was won in me bed, I tell yez, and that's to say that I'll be dead before the week's out."

"Wall, I guess nobdy'll miss yer when ye're gone," growled Peter, stumping away. "One Irishman more nor less don't count fur much."

Pepper wasn't going to put up with that, if he was frightened nearly to death.

"Go an, ye wooden-legged idjit!" he growled. "I'll live long enough to bolt the jaw off ye, at anny rate."

"Belay that, you lubber," muttered Pilgrim, pausing. "Don't yer give me none o' yer sarse, or I'll make a ghost

"Well, I don't want Pepper sauce, anyhow, you red-headed whiflet."

"Go an, go an, neow, or yez will get hurted," snapped Pepper, doubling up his fist.

He was too mad to recollect anything about his recent fright and flight now.

Peter Pilgrim was a coward from Shaking Creek.

He could bluster and blow until it came time to put up his fives.

Then he flunked.

That's how it worked this time.

Pepper was a fighter from Mud river, and when he put up his dukes he meant business.

"Come on, ye ould squirt," he vociferated,

"Bah!"

That was enough for Pepper.

He dropped candle and club and fled in dismay. Another burst of laughter followed him.

Then he heard the sound of pursuing hoofs.

The arch fiend was after him for sure.

He yelled as loud as he could yell, and cleared a whole flight of stairs at a jump.

He landed on his back and howled melodiously.

Along came Simpson and his whiskers with a light in his fist.

"Thunder and guns, man, what are you making all this racket about?" asked the professor of English branches.

"The devil is a'fther me, sor," answered Pepper.

Simpson made a slight mistake in supposing the boys were still up-stairs.

They had been, but it did not follow that they were going to stay there all night.

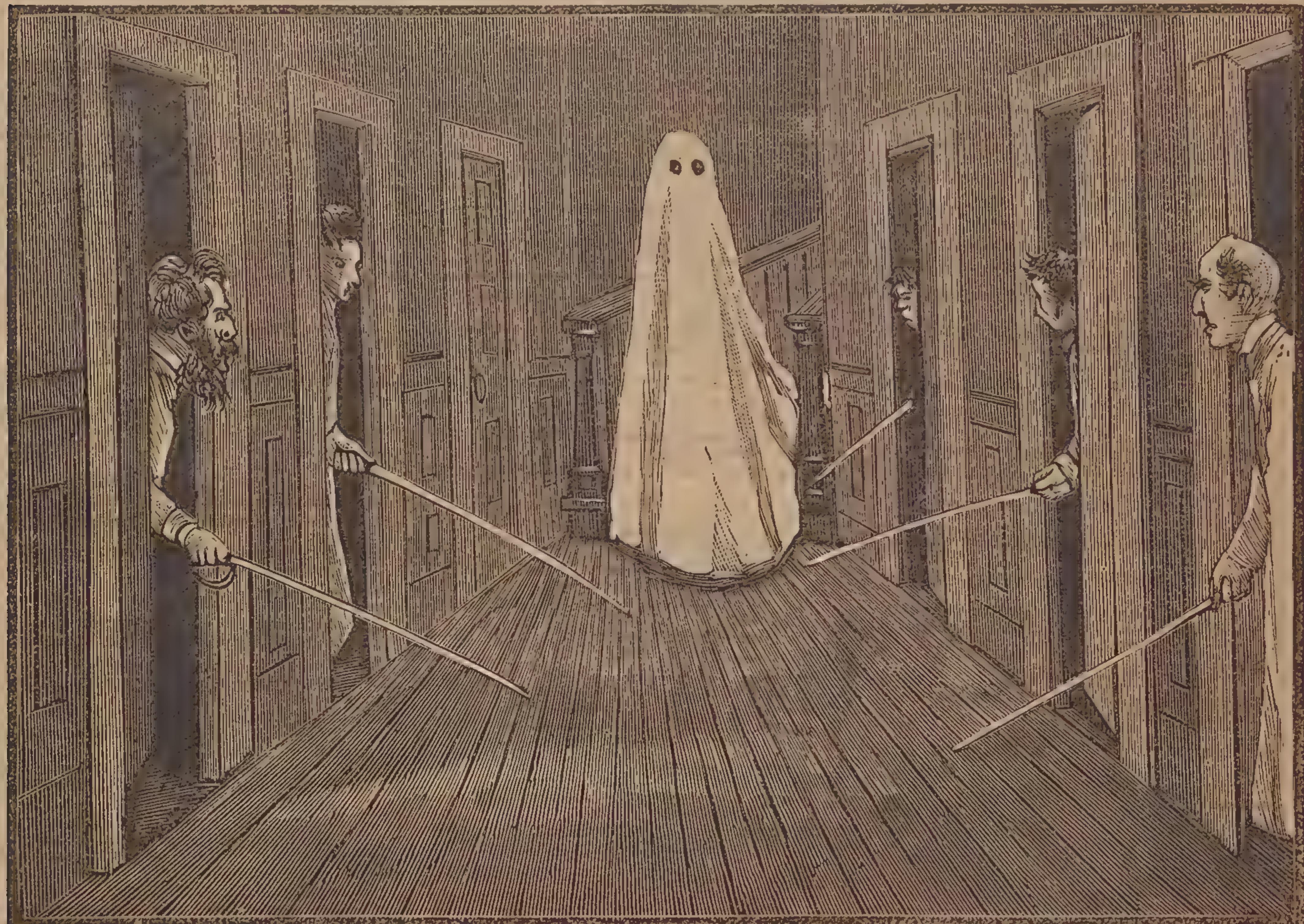
They took the alarm as soon as Simpson appeared on the lower landing.

There were two flights of stairs leading to that top flat.

As Simpson and Pepper went up one, the boys scurried down the other.

The calf was the only creature that the professor found.

"Take your cousin down to the stable, Pepper," he grunted, "unless you want him to sleep with you."



It was the ghost of the wooden-legged man. It came stumping along with monotonous tread, uttering strange sounds.

The clanging and banging could be heard in the distance as the ghostly figure moved along the dimly-lighted hall.

swinging his arms. "Come an till I pulverize yez!"

"Nonsense! He has no use for you. You're too green to burn."

"Faix, I saw him, sor, an' he had two eyes an' him like ear'g lamps, an' a v'ice like t'undher."

"You're dreaming. Get up and go to bed."

"Faix, a mon niver dhrames the same thing twict, sor."

"Nonsense! Go to bed."

"I wouldn't dar' do it, sor, till the devil wot turned eout."

"Bah!"

The sound came from above.

The man with the whiskers looked up.

Then he burst into a hoarse laugh.

"Ha, you were frightened at your own shadow," he said.

"How's that, sor?"

"The thing is nothing but a big calf, and that's all you are."

Pepper was enlightened and enraged at the same time.

"Oho, the little vilyans," he muttered.

"What do you mean?" asked Simpson, pulling his slugs.

"The byes pit the bossy in me bed to frighten me. Troth, I might have known it."

"The boys, eh?"

"Yis, sor. They tuck the baste away from me the day, just."

"Hal then they must be up there, the rogues. I'll hustle 'em out of that."

"Sure, I wouldn't shleep wi' the hairy crather; not be any means, sor," said Pepper.

"Well, get him out of here, then, and go to bed. We can't have the house turned upside down for your foolishness."

The professor was mad from his toes to his whiskers.

He had expected to catch the boys, and read the riot act to them.

He had only caught a half-grown calf.

He went away, still mad, and Pepper chased the calf down-stairs and out of the house with a great clatter.

"Troth, I moight have guessed how it wor," he mused, as he went back to bed, "but that's allus the way wi' me. I niver think until to-morrer phwat I ought to know to-day, begob."

The boys chuckled over the snap on Pepper, and voted it immense.

They had one in the press for Peter, moreover, and meant to issue it soon.

They were willing to wait, however, till old Stumpfoot gave them provocation.

Then he would know what it was for.

The chance came in a day or two, however.

Peter overheard two or three of the boys laughing over the joke on little Red Head.

He spotted them, and then went off and told Baldy about it.

The next day these boys got whaled.

The sting of the rattan had not ceased to tickle

Peter did not care to be pulverized that day.

He lighted out, and Pepper helped him along with the toe of his boot.

"Go an, ye phwite liveried ould shtuff," he yelled, as Peter fled. "Yez haven't the moral co'ge av a mouse, so yez haven't."

This little episode being over, Pepper started for his room once more.

Then all of a sudden, he remembered the ghost.

He had more spunk this trip than he had before, however.

"Sorra a care do I care for all the ghosts in the worrlid," he said defiantly. "Sure, it's some thrick that Peter's been pittin' an' me, an' I'm not to be frightened be anyn' sich ould catamaran, that I ain't."

Arming himself with a lighted candle and a big bludgeon, Pepper started for bed.

Everything was as quiet as a churchyard.

No mysterious noises, no flying missiles, no stumbling blocks, no nothing.

This state of things inspired confidence in the breast of little Pepper.

When he reached his room he felt as if he could face a hundred ghosts.

He grabbed the knob and threw open the door with a bang.

A pair of fiery eyes glowed from out the darkness and a terrible voice said:

before they vowed vengeance against the informer.

They knew who he was, because he reviled them publicly the next time they met, and asked them how they liked their medicine.

"The Boomers will have to take this up," muttered one.

"Give it to Johnny Brown & Co., and it'll be better done," said another.

Johnny and Billy, with the assistance of two or three others, prepared to get square on Peggs.

That night when he went his rounds they laid for him.

As he went stumping through the hall where the boys' rooms were situated, all the gas jets suddenly went out.

One of Johnny Brown's pals had attended to that.

Peter generally turned the gas off from that floor himself, but this time the boys did it for him.

He had hardly had time to be surprised before the boys made a dash for him.

They upset him in a trice and sat on him.

Then somebody brought a light.

It didn't do Peter any good, however, for he could not see any of his captors.

He couldn't kick, but he took it out in yelling.

"Ye young ruffians," he bawled, "I'll see ye all hanged yet; I'll have ye put in irons and fed on bread and water, I'll get the whole on ye flogged, I'll have ye all—"

He might have gone on threatening till the end of the chapter but for one thing.

Johnny Brown clapped a section of garden hose in his mouth and fastened it behind his head.

That cut short his eloquence.

Then the boys hoisted him on his feet and tied his hands behind his back.

He tried to see who they were, but they kept behind him and he was dished.

Then they put a shroud on him.

At least, it passed for one, and looked quite as funeral.

It was a long sheet and it covered him from head to foot.

There were two round places cut for his eyes, but that was all.

He was now the first wooden-legged ghost on record.

"Now go," said Johnny, in a subcellar voice, "and beware the wrath of the Folderol Society."

Then they released poor Peter and started him down stairs.

Just anterior to this, two or three of the boys had been sent down to work off the other part of the same racket.

One had a big mallet, another had an ox chain, and the third carried a big, tin pan.

The three musicians went down to the floor where Blodgett and the professors slept.

Then they piped up for all they knew.

Even the great Wagner himself could never have produced such discords.

Bang-whang-slam!

Rattle-ding-ping!

Punk-boom-chunk!

Such a racket was never heard since the invention of the Chinese language.

One of the boys banged away with his mallet on the boards.

The second thrashed around with the chain.

The third belted the big tin pan with foot and fist.

The din was perfectly deafening.

It was enough to galvanize a corpse.

The seven sleepers would have been awakened in a jiffy if they heard it.

They did not, but Blodgett, Simpson and all the other professors did.

They must have been stone deaf not to have done so.

The tumult was something awful.

"Great hambones!" cried Whiskers, in elegant English. "What in the name of Daniel Webster is that?"

Then he got up and started out to investigate.

So did Blodgett in his bald head and big nightcap.

So did all the rest of the staff of the Birchville Collegiate Institute.

It was a regular meeting of the faculty in fact.

All hands wanted to know what was up.

"Did you hear a noise?" asked Blodgett, who was a little deaf.

"A little noise?" said Simpson. "My dear sir, I heard a mighty big noise."

The racket had not ceased, but it was further off.

The boys had sneaked up-stairs by the back way as soon as they heard Simpson's door open.

They kept up the noise on their way up-stairs, however.

"What in time is it?" asked one of the professors.

"Gas explosion!"

"Steam heater out of order."

"Boy falling out of bed."

"Mrs. Dodger taking off her shoes."

These and various other explanations were given by the facetious instructors.

Simpson went ahead to investigate.

He presently came back and said:

"Boy, playing ghost. We'll give him all the ghost he wants."

"Could you tell who it was?" asked Blodgett.

"No; but he is coming this way, and I suppose he thinks he can frighten us."

"Yes, he can—not," said all the professors.

"We will teach these boys not to play practical jokes," said old Blodgett, sternly.

Then he went to his room.

So did Simpson.

Likewise the rest of the gang.

They were all in the habit of occasionally holding private seances in their rooms with the unruly boys of the establishment.

They were all provided with good, stout rattans.

It is unnecessary to add that they knew how to use them.

In a few moments each member of the committee on rules appeared at his door with a long rattan in his hand.

At the end of the hall, just descending the stairs, a spectral figure was seen.

It was all robed in white, and advanced with a slow and measured tread.

It was the ghost of the wooden-legged man.

It came stumping along with monotonous tread, uttering strange sounds.

The clanging and banging could be heard in the distance, as the ghostly figure moved along the dimly-lighted hall.

Poor Peter was trying to get to his room, so as to take the gag out of his mouth and the cords from his arms.

He was the ghost that had brought all the professors out of their rooms.

Now they were ready to give him a warm reception.

CHAPTER VI.

PETER went pegging away along the darkened hall on his way to the lower regions.

He looked like a denizen of that place in his white sheet as he stumped on.

Blodgett and the professors took him for one of the boys masquerading as a ghost.

They were ready for him.

When he reached the lower landing they all went for him hot and strong, like a rum punch.

They gave him several punches, and rum ones they were, too, in one respect.

Swish!

Biff!

Bang!

He got it on all sides.

Long experience had taught those pedagogues how to wield a rattan with the most telling effect.

Every crack was put in with a good business hand and no extra flourishes.

They got on all sides of him and did effective execution.

Whish!

Swish!

Ping!

Oh, what a surprise!

How those rattans did twist and curl around his ribs!

Didn't they make him jump, though?

He winced and kicked and tried to yell, but all in vain.

The gag in his mouth prevented him from saying a word.

That's what made the boys' gag work so well.

At last the sheet was torn completely away from him, and he sat on the floor, looking all disintegrated.

Then Blodgett, Simpson, et al, gazed upon him in wonder.

He sat on the floor while they stood in a circle surveying the wreck they had wrought.

"Well, I never!" muttered Simpson in surprise.

"Why, I declare!" gasped Blodgett in equal astonishment.

"Why, it's Peter!"

"Only to think of it!"

"At his time of life!"

"The funny old fellow!"

"H'm! I think we've been whaling the wrong fellow."

"Barking up the wrong tree, as it were."

Old Baldhead adjusted his glasses, stared at Pegtoes and remarked sagely:

"H'm—ha—well, really, I beg pardon, gentlemen, but I fear that we have made a mistake."

"Looks very much that way," retorted Whiskers as he removed the gag from Peter's mouth.

Then old Woodenleg had a few words to say about it.

"I didn't think as ye'd go and flog a man o' my standin', professor," he began. "I thought ye had more sense."

Then Simpson removed the cords which bound the janitor's arms.

"How came you in such a plight, Peter?" asked Blodgett.

"Somebody has been paying off old sores, I fancy," remarked Simpson.

Whiskers was not dead in love with Peter.

He knew also that the boys were not clean mashed on the cranky janitor.

Hence his deductions.

"How did I?" growled Peter. "Ask them scoundrels of boys. They know all about it, confound 'em."

"Really, Mr. Pilgrim, this accusation is so sweeping, so—"

"Sweeping, is it? Well, shiver my main boom, but I'd like to sweep the whole piratical lot into the lee scuppers and jump on 'em."

"Yes, yes; I presume so; but perhaps you will explain—"

"Explain, yer grandmother! It's easy enough to see inter. The young villains got me off on a wild goose chase, fell inter me, the hull of 'em, tied me up and set me adrift, and then you and the professors had to wallop me like the—"

"Never mind what, Mr. Pilgrim," interposed Blodgett. "It was a very natural mistake. We heard a very great noise, and thought someone was trying to frighten—"

"That be blowed," grunted Peter, as he stumped away.

He was as mad with Blodgett and the rest as with the boys.

To think that they could not tell a man of his dignity from a mere school boy.

It was absurd.

Of course, his natural loquacity of character would shine through any disguise.

It was a mere subterfuge, this excuse that they did not know him.

There could not be a lamer excuse.

Could anything be more transparent?

They were all leagued against him, that was the trouble.

They were jealous of his strong corrective influence upon the boys, that was what.

They knew they could not keep the young villains in check as he could.

That made them all down upon him of course.

Thus reasoned the stumping Pilgrim as he faded away.

He had the whole thing down to the finest of points.

He knew it all and nobody could inform him.

He stumped away there as mad as a hen caught out in a shower of rain.

Nobody seemed particularly sorry for him now.

"That's on victory for the boys," mused Simpson to himself.

"Ahem, ha, well, really, that is to say, h'm," grunted Blodgett, polishing his bald head with a big handkerchief, "there seems to have been a mistake made somewhere."

Nobody disputed the statement.

"Really," continued Baldy, "the boys are getting more mischievous every day. Somebody must be made an example of."

"That means that some innocent kid with a bad reputation is going to catch it," observed Simpson, so to speak.

"There are altogether too many practical jokes going on," remarked Blodgett, in conclusion, "Somebody will have to be punished."

He did not ask Peter who the offenders were, however.

Somehow or other, he did not think that the janitor's testimony would be unbiased.

No, he determined to search out the guilty ones himself.

The consequence was that he picked out four or five dull fellows that had nothing whatever to do with the racket, and gave them a terrible whaling.

Thus poetic justice was appeased, and Blodgett's conscience was cleared.

Just let him catch them on one of their nocturnal expeditions, and he would have them dead to rights."

One day, when he was in the cellar fixing the furnace, he saw two boys go past the window, and heard one of them say:

"We'll go out again to-night and have another high old time."

"Bet your life!" retorted the other. "That side window is just the thing."

Then the boys went on, and Peter hustled around trying to find his glasses, so that he might identify the malefactors.

"Going out to-night by the side winder; are they?" he grunted. "Well, we'll see if they will."

house, overlooking the drive-way, and was at the end of the corridor on which the boys' rooms faced.

It was a dandy exit for anybody who did not desire that his movements were watched.

The snoozing apartments of Blodgett and the rest had their windows on another side of the building.

A boy, lowering himself by a rope, could get out without the slightest chance of being heard or seen.

Peter in his room below stairs heard the window raised and lowered, and something going out, more than once.

To be sure of his ground, he went around to that side and made an examination.

"All right, my boy."

"Good joke on old Pete, ain't it?"

"Yes, he thinks he's such a fine watchman."

"He's no use at all."

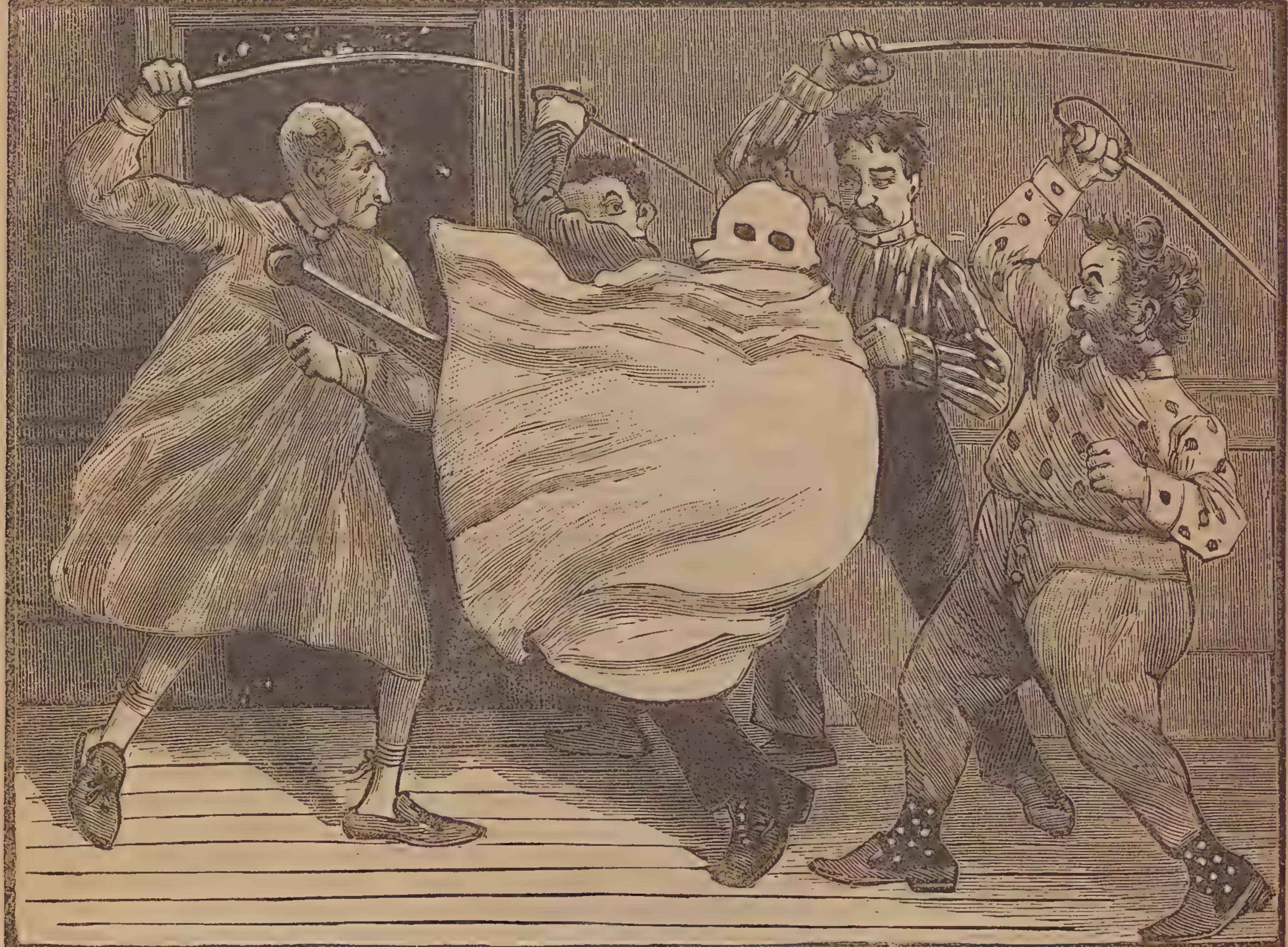
You can imagine how the old codger felt at hearing himself thus discussed.

"Huh! no good, am I?" he growled under his breath. "Fine joke on me, is it? We'll see who comes out ahead this time, my lads."

There was no time for long-winded soliloquies now.

The boys were coming down the rope.

There was no moon, but Peter could easily make out a dark object descending.



Oh, what a surprise! How those rattans did twist and curl around his ribs! Didn't they make him jump, though! He winced and kicked and tried to yell, but all in vain.

He fairly chuckled when he thought how he would come up with the young scamps.

They had evidently got into the habit of going out at night from the way they talked.

He would get the bulge on them this time, however, and pay them up for their last little gag at his expense.

It would not do to say a word to the principal in advance, however.

No, he would catch the rascals in the act and then bring them, overcome with a sense of their guilt, before Blodgett.

Johnny and Billy were the two pretty boys who were getting up the newest yell on Peter.

It was a sell, of course, and old Stump ought to have known it.

From the way they saw him grinning to himself after they had thrown out their bait, they knew that he swallowed it, hook and all.

Then they began to make their preparations for the great event.

Peter, likewise, got ready for the big surprise he was going to give the boys.

He knew what they meant by the side window, well enough.

It was one which opened on the north side of the

The paint was marred in several places by the heels of boots, apparently.

That settled it in the mind of the astute Peter Pilgrim.

He was on to the snap now with both feet and stump.

That night, when the lights were out, he crept softly from his luxurious straw mattress, and sneaked out of the house by a back door.

Johnny had posted a sentinel upon whom he could rely, and Peter's movements were duly reported to him.

The spy stumped along with as little noise as was necessary and hid behind a water-butt not far from the place where one descending from the window would be bound to reach the ground.

Then he waited and listened.

He did not get tired waiting.

In fact, it seemed that he had arrived in the nick of time.

He heard the noisy opening of the window above.

Then a rope was chucked out.

Then he heard voices.

"You go first this time; I went first last time."

It was the ringleader of the expedition, no doubt.

Slowly he descended, kicking his heels against the side of the house every other minute.

"You'll kick yer heels in a different way, young feller, when I catch yer," growled Peter.

"Faster, boys," cried a voice. "I think I hear old Stepandfetchit."

The voice was that of Johnny Brown.

Peter nearly jumped out of the socket of his wooden leg.

The very boy he desired most to catch!

He looked up with eager anticipation.

The dark object was rapidly descending.

Now was the time.

He dashed out from behind his ambush.

The boy on the rope was nearly down.

"Now I've got yer!" yelled Peter, as he grabbed the boy around the waist.

He had got something for a fact.

It was not a boy, however.

The boy was on the other end of the rope.

There was a tug, a slip, a tilting of some heavy object, and then Peter gasped for breath.

He was deluged from head to heel with cold water.

His boy was a big bucket filled to the brim with washing fluid.

He brought the whole business down on himself, and was nearly washed away.

All he could do was gasp and sit down very suddenly on the ground.

The weather was by no means warm, and a dose of cold water did not improve it.

"Ugh! yer young buccaneers!" muttered Peter, as he plumped down on the ground.

Up went the bucket, down came the window and all was still.

When Peter looked up he could see nothing.

The boys had retired, satisfied with their victory.

It began to dawn upon Peter that the weather was cold in more respects than one.

Once more had Johnny Brown & Co. eughred him.

Once more was he sold for the price of old junk.

The conviction slowly forced itself upon him that he was the chumpiest kind of a chump.

It did not make him feel good, by any means.

"Scuttle and blow up the young imps!" he muttered, as he crept, all of a shiver, into the house. "If I find out who done this, I'll have 'em all court marshaled and cashiered, tear my copper off if I don't."

He could threaten till the cows came home, and be no better off.

The boys were several points in the lead, and still held the pennant.

Peter had nothing to say to them the next day, and they kept still, so that he might not catch on to the getters-up of the previous night's little joke.

The man with the wooden leg was not the only person in the school for whom the boys had an inordinate affection.

"They loved Mrs. Dodger, the housekeeper, with the same ardency that the father of lies is supposed to be enamored of a church.

She was as cross as two sticks, as peppery as a mustard plantation, and as sour as ten days old garbage.

That's the kind of old girl she was.

She thought the boys were all little angels from the lower side of the universe, and could not abide them any more than she could like cats.

Both were her enemies and gave her no end of woriment.

The boys would not have bothered her if she had let them alone.

She and Peter ought to have been twins, however, judging from the way she picked and nagged at the boys.

Consequently they liked to make things pleasant for her.

When she chose, she could feed them quite decently.

On the other hand, if she felt like it, she could nearly starve them.

The breakfast, on the mornin following the snap on Peter consisted of burned meat, underdone mush, raw coffee and soggy biscuits.

No well-regulated juvenile stomach can stand any such mess as that.

Dodger was mad about something, no one knew what.

It was easily seen what made the boys mad.

They resolved to give the old lady a token of their esteem that she would remember.

Perhaps they would have better grub after that and perhaps they wouldn't.

At any rate, they determined to try the experiment.

Just about this time Pepper was taking care of an interesting family of piglets, or juvenile swine.

It was rather late in the season for them, with the winter coming on, but there they were, notwithstanding.

There were six of the adolescent porkers, all about a foot in length, but giants in contrarieness.

Johnny, Billy and Sam Bemis captured the young grunters, not without considerable protest on the part of Mrs. Hogg; however, and cuddled them up in a big clothes basket, the bottom of which was filled with chopped hay.

Then the basket was covered over with a piece of sailcloth and a card attached to the same, whereon was inscribed a legend, which recited that within was a slight token of esteem to Mrs. Dodger from an unknown friend.

Well, just before tea time, Pepper was asked to take the basket to the kitchen and give it to Mrs. Dodger, as she would be in the culinary laboratory at that time.

I doubt if Pepper would have done so, if he had not been presented with a new silver dollar when the request was made.

At all events, he did as he was desired, took the basket to the kitchen, planked it down in the middle of the floor and said:

"Here's a prisint for yez, Missus, but the byes tould me I was not to let on phwere it come from."

"Lor' suzz, who'd supposed them tykes o' boys

"d make me a present?" snapped the housekeeper. "I s'pose they're shamed o' theirselves fur makin' so much noise last night and keepin' a poor lone-lorn woman awake till nearly morning, and if anything will rile a body it is that, and I must say that a noisier lot of young yugabounds—"

"Aba, niver mind that, mum," interrupted Pepper. "Yez can say all that asther. Open the basket and see phwat's in it."

Pepper was as anxious as the housekeeper to know what the basket contained, for he had not missed his shoats, and so gave the old girl more assistance than he usually offered to any one.

He took out a big jack-knife, severed the cords and yanked off the cloth.

The infantile pigs had already begun to grow uneasy, and now they became frantic.

Squealing in six different keys, they stampeded out of the basket in a hurry.

Pepper uttered a wild, Irish yell and sat down in a bucket of water immediately.

Mrs. Dodger shrieked, but did not lose her head. She grabbed a broom and began a war of extermination upon the grunters.

The cook howled and started for the door, leaving it open.

Only one out of six pigs had sense to follow.

The rest dodged about in ten different directions in a second.

One ran under the big stove, and would have been roast pork in a jiffy if Dodger had not hunted him out.

Another jumped into a pan of biscuits that had been set to rise, and they became as heavy as lead.

The housekeeper made a dash at a third little squealer with the broom and took Pepper across the head.

Down he went into the big clothes basket in a brace of shakes.

What a squealing there was, to be sure! Mrs. Dodger laid it all to the little gardener.

First she gave him a swat and then she cuffed the pigs.

Finally she got them started for the open door and sent them flying out.

The circus was not over by considerable.

Peter was stumping by the door when the porcine exodus took place.

In a second the young pigs were all around him.

Moreover, one of the boys had let loose the mama of the baby swine.

She came to their rescue with a rush and a snort.

In an instant Peter was upset and small-sized pigs were racing all over him.

And still there was more to follow.

CHAPTER VII.

Mrs. Dodger, having turned the little pigs out of the kitchen, proceeded to eject the one who had brought them in.

She blamed Pepper for the whole business, although he was as innocent as the pigs themselves.

The minute Pepper got out of the big basket, into which the irate housekeeper had sprawled him, he got another crack with the broom.

This was a polite invitation to make himself less conspicuous.

He went flying, as though propelled by a spring.

This happened just as Peter was getting up, after being raced over by a whole family of pigs.

Pepper was shot out of the door as from a cannon, head down and arms flying.

His head took Pegtoes in the pit of the stomach with the force of a cannon-ball, and down he went flat on his back.

Pepper fell over him, of course, and things were very much mixed.

"Get off!" sputtered Peter.

"Can't yez see phwere yez are going?" demanded Pepper.

The boys took in the circus from a safe distance.

"Pepper and Salt are pretty well mixed up," remarked Johnny.

"It was a very seasonable joke," added Billy Bounce.

"Very spicet affair," put in Sam.

"We'll get all the sauce we want if we stay around," observed Tom Wilson.

"Yes, Pepper sauce, stirred up with a wooden leg," returned Johnny.

Then the boys retired, the two chromos having arisen.

"What did yer want ter run inter me like that fur, ye Irish pirate?"

"Faix, it wor ye phwat rin into me, ould Pegtops."

"Don't yer sarse me, ye raw mouthed Irish lubber."

"Hould an, hould an," said Pepper, doubling up his fist. "I'll take no insults from the likes av ye."

"Tain't insultin' to tell a feller like you what

compliment fur ye to be spoke to at all, ye Irish bantam."

"Go on, ye ould canaller," sputtered Pepper. "Yez can pit an airs, bekase ye think I'm small, but be the poipes, I'm big enough to down ye anny day, ye big stuff. Begob, I'd take the wooden leg off ye and bate yer brains sout av yez had anny, so I wud."

The boys, hearing the sound of a fracas, came back to see what it was all about.

They found the janitor and the gardener exchanging black looks and naughty words.

"Don't yer dare talk ter me like that, Irish," growled Peter, shaking his fist.

"Ah, go on wid yez," muttered Pepper. "Annything is good enough to say to ye."

"It yer wasn't so little, I'd smash yer bulwarks in, yer runt."

"Bah, yez couldn't harrum me av I was half me beith."

"Don't yer go makin' me mad, yer lubber. Get up sail and scud out o' here, or there'll be a shipwreck putty soon."

"Don't be afraid of him, Pepper," said Johnny, the boys having returned.

"Dare him to knock a load of wood off your shoulder, Pegs," suggested Billy.

"Come on, make a ring and have the thing out, Markiss of Gooseberry rules," added Johnny.

That young fellow was up to snuff.

He knew what he was about.

If he could only detain those two young roosters a few moments, it was all hunk.

He saw something which they did not.

That was Mrs. Dodger coming to the door with a pail of water in her hand.

She wasn't going to have any squabbling going on right in front of the door like that.

She meant to put a stop to it right away, or know the reason.

of pets and then declared that the boys let them die, and so they came in for another larruping.

Johnny saw her get the pail of water.

"Go on, Pepper," he said. "Paste him in the mug. We'll see that you get fair play."

"Don't stand any nonsense, Pete," said Billy, encouragingly.

The delay thus caused was all that the boys wanted.

A couple of moments more and the two boasters would have moved further off.

Now it was too late.

Out came Dodger with a big pail full of water.

Not over clean water, either.

Swish!

Swash!

Thump!

Both belligerents got it.

Right in the neck too.

It cured them of wanting to fight.

Cold water was thrown on their plans, in fact. Neither had a word to say after that.

The deluge had taken away all ideas but one.

They did so.

Peter made for the cellar and Pepper flew to the barn.

As for the boys they just snickered over the sudden breaking up of the proposed fight.

"They both had to take water," chuckled Johnny.

"And swim out," added the young scion of the house of Bounce.

"It knocked the tank show clean out," laughed Sam.

"And watered Peter's stock," said someone else. Peter laid the whole thing upon the boys.

He heard a noise at the back of the house and supposed that the boys were in mischief.

They always were, and why not then?

If so, he must ascertain their names.

Old Blodgett had said that the skylarking must be stopped.

If Peter could stop it, so much the better.

That's what started him around to the rear of the house.

Pepper's head started him in the other direction. Then Mrs. Dodger's bucket of dirty water completed the stampede.

Of course it was all the fault of the boys.

If they had not been making a rumpus, he would not have gone around.

If he had not gone around he would never have received that butt in the stomach.

Ergo, it was all the fault of the boys.

Consequently he must get even with them.

He immediately reported to old Blodgett that some of them had been tormenting the housekeeper.

Those complained of got a lively old whaling.

That did not satisfy Peter.

The next

After that it came on warm again.

That cranky janitor immediately built up a rousing fire, and the boys were nearly roasted.

He was bound to get square on them in one way or another.

However, old Simpson, professor of English

Johnny, Billy and others were of this number. What must that old curmudgeon do but set the rabbits loose among the cabbages, put the ducks in the fountain, roast the chickens on the front porch and bivouac the guinea pigs in the library? The very mischief was to pay, of course.

They were on the playground at the time, far enough away from school to prevent the mean old codger from hearing them.

"We'll hide his leg where he can see it, but where he'll have a hard enough time to get it for all that."



One smart tug and victory was his. He unlimbered himself, as it were, and gave one convulsive stretch upward. Ha, ha, he had it at last! At least he thought he had. Just then something happened.

branches, was no more comfortable than the boys and he kicked.

That had the effect of blocking the old crank in one direction.

He was ready enough to start off in another, however.

Once, when the boys were all off in the woods, supposing they had lots of time, he turned the school clock ahead ten minutes and then rang the bell.

Result: All hands got a lecture, and some got licked."

That wasn't all he did.

Some of the boys kept chickens, ducks, rabbits and other pets, in a little building back of the garden.

The boys were accused of neglecting their pets and making nuisances of them.

They got another whaling, but even that did not satisfy Peter, for he killed the whole blooming lot.

After this latest exhibition of spite on the part of Peter Pilgrim, the firm of Johnny Brown & Co.

determined to give the old crank one good lesson.

"We'll fix him," said Johnny.

"Saw his leg in two, so he can't go stumping around telling lies on us," put in Billy.

"Take it away from him and hide it."

"Chuck it in the river."

"And throw him after it."

"Hold up," said Johnny, chuckling. "I've got a snap."

"What is it?" asked all the boys.

"How are you going to do it?"

"You wait till evening, young fellows, and I'll tell you all about it."

The boys knew that the thing was sure to go through if Johnny Brown managed it.

They therefore said no more about it.

Johnny went at the thing scientifically.

He meant to make a raid on Peter's room when the old duffer was asleep.

It was quite necessary that he should be sound asleep, too.

Johnny fixed that.

He knew that Peter was in the habit of smoking a pipe of strong tobacco before turning in.

Everybody else knew it too, if their windows happened to be near Peter's.

Well, the young man first procured a small quantity of opium. Then he sneaked into the janitor's room at a time when it was vacant.

Next he mixed the soporific drug with the tobacco that Peter smoked.

That made the first part of the plan all right.

Then Master Johnny hunted around and found a very long step-ladder tucked away in a corner of the cellar.

This he luggered up at a convenient season with the help of Billy Bounce.

They stored it out of the way in a dark back hall, ready for use when wanted.

Everything was now ready for the racket.

After Peter had stumped all over the house, on his rounds, and had retired to his own room, Johnny and Billy stole quietly down-stairs.

They made no more noise than a couple of cats walking on velvet.

There was a transom over the door of Peter's boudoir, and it was open.

Through it came the heavily loaded wreaths of tobacco smoke.

By the scent thereof Johnny knew that all was hunky.

Then he and Billy stole up to their little beds.

They lay awake till the clock struck one, and then they ran down, like the mouse in the ballad.

This time they did not mind about making a little noise.

They took a couple of boys and a dark lantern along, to use in carrying out their snap.

Peter's door was open, for he feared no invasion.

Johnny and Billy got the step-ladder, and carried it into the enemy's room.

The old tar was snoring like a steam-engine.

If they had held a salvation army hurrah in the room he would not have heard it.

The drugged tobacco had put in its fine work.

The wooden leg lay on the floor alongside the bed.

Johnny collared it and smiled triumphantly.

Then the boys hoisted the ladder, and put it over at one side of the room.

Away up, close to the ceiling, was a big nail used for hanging a picture on.

At present a lovely motto, worked in worsted, framed and glazed, hung suspended therefrom.

GONE, BUT NOT FORGOTTEN.

That's what it said, and it was memory of some relative of Peter's.

It was quite appropriate to the occasion.

Johnny winked, took the wooden leg and climbed to the very top of the ladder.

That's where he generally was—in work or in fun.

The boys held the thing as firm as a rock and kept it from wabbling.

Johnny took a piece of stout twine from his pocket and tied it around the middle of the hickory limb, otherwise wooden leg.

Then he secured the aforesaid leg in a horizontal position to the picture nail, making the cord very tight.

"There we are!" he warbled. "Now let's see Mr. Pedro Timberfoot get us down in a hurry."

Then he came down from his perch.

The boys then skipped out, went to the barn and hid the ladder under a lot of straw.

After this they returned to the house and sought their downy couches.

Well, Peter slept till an hour after his usual time the next morning.

Then he got up, drew on his shirt and trousers, and looked around for his leg.

It was not to be found in its usual place.

"H'm! very funny, hain't put that stump o' mine anywhere else fur ten years. Wonder what's going to happen?"

He looked under the bed, under the wash-stand, under the bureau, but found it not.

"Curussest thing I ever heerd on. Hain't put it anywhere else fur— Well, how in thunderation did it get up there?"

He was sitting on the bed looking all around and suddenly discovered his stump hanging just under the ceiling.

"Wull, I'll be swamped! I never stuck that thing up there, I'll swear! 'D have ter be a heap sight drunker nor I ever was to do that."

"Sink and scuttle them boys! It's them what's done that ere, blast their hides! I'd like to tie 'em all up to the mainmast and belt blazes out of 'em fur that."

"Speet they'll be waitin' ter see me come hoppin' along without my peg, just so's they kin laugh at me, the young sculpins, but they won't get the chance."

"No, sirree, bub, I'll take the wind out o' their sails this time, sure as I'm settin' here."

"I'll get that leg down my own self, and just cheat 'em out o' their gigglin', split my mains'l if I don't."

Having thus made up his mind, old Peter set about carrying out his purpose.

He was not very tall to start with, and the furniture was not remarkably high in the next place.

However, if he piled enough of it up, he might reach the ceiling.

First he dragged his bed over to the other side of the room.

Next he hauled the bureau alongside the bed and looked up.

If he had had two good legs he might have put the bureau on top of the bed, but as he had to hop to do anything, it was not to be thought of.

However, he fetched his washstand and put that on top of the bureau.

Then he got the only chair in the room and put it on top of the wash-stand.

"That arter be high enough," he remarked.

However, the trouble was to get from the bed to the bureau.

A one-legged man, you must remember, cannot climb as well as one with two.

There must be some way out of the trouble, though.

Peter soon found it.

He hauled out one of the bureau drawers and put it upside down on the bed.

Then, to make sure, he hauled out another one.

Then he climbed first to the bureau, then to the wash stand and lastly, to the chair.

Here he laid the drawer on the chair seat and advanced a peg higher.

Then he looked up.

The coveted leg was right above him.

He balanced himself on his good leg, braced the stump against the chair back and reached up.

The ends of his fingers came just below the wooden stump.

So near and yet such a great way off!

Why hadn't he grown a few inches taller while he was about it?

If there was only a Procrustes loafing around who could stretch him a little.

There were no more bureau drawers that he could press in the service.

There wasn't even a book or a footstool.

It was too provoking.

He might turn the drawer on its side, though.

In that case he would be obliged to climb down, rearrange his Eiffel tower and climb up again.

Was it worth the trouble?

Peter decided to make one more attempt.

He wasn't going to let those boys get the best of him.

Not if he knew it.

He stood on tip-toe and reached as high as he could.

Ah, eureka!

He could touch the coveted prize.

One smart tug and victory was his.

He unlimbered himself, as it were, and gave one convulsive stretch upward.

Ha, ha, he had it at last!

At least he thought he had.

Just then something happened.

What was it?

Peter sneezed.

CHAPTER VIII.

OH, fatal sneeze!

Oh, unlucky agitation of the olfactory nerve!

Oh, disastrous and unfortunate titillation of the lachrymal glands which caused that sneeze.

Peter sneezed.

Those two words express volumes.

Some dust got in Peter's nose and a spasmodic stertorization ensued.

And just as victory was in his grasp.

There he was, on tiptoe on a bureau drawer, on a chair, on a washstand, on a bureau, reaching up to bring down his wooden leg which hung to a peg just under the ceiling.

It was just another house that Jack built, without colored cuts.

And then Peter sneezed.

Disastrous result!

Down came the whole fabric.

The drawer tipped, and Peter's game-leg slipped.

The chair had to go and lose its balance, of course.

Its pernicious example was followed by the washstand.

The bureau could not very well fall.

That was no reason why Peter had to go and kick a hole out of the looking-glass.

He did, all the same.

Crash!

Smash!

Bang!

Over went the whole business.

Peter landed on his back on the bed.

That immediately went back on him.

It was one of those iron affairs which shut up like a jackknife.

It performed its functions to the letter.

It shut up.

Peter rolled out upon the floor.

He was a wreck.

Likewise the furniture.

The bureau drawers were busted.

The chair seat needed half soling.

The washstand was minus a leg.

Peter sat on the floor, his two legs, good and bad, stretched out in front of him, and gazed sadly at the ceiling.

The wooden leg was still there, like the star-spangled banner we read about.

From the same nail, terribly askew, and with its glass smashed, hung a neat little motto in a fly-speckled frame:

Gone, but not Forgotten.

Oh, the irony of fate!

That was the first thing Peter saw when he looked up.

"Consarn ye!" he growled, apostrophizing the wooden leg. "Ye can stay up there and rot for all the trouble I'll take to fetch ye down."

It must not be supposed that all this noise did not raise an alarm.

It did, for a fact.

Pepper, Mrs. Dodger, the cook, the up-stairs girl, Blodgett, Simpson, half a dozen instructors, and twice as many boys came rushing to the spot.

"Phwat's the matter, begob?"

"Dear me, what a noise!"

"Lor, suz, the house is coming down!"

"Somebody seems to be making a stir in the world."

"Hurrah! It's old Peter breaking up house-keeping!"

All hands had something to say about it.

The door was thrown open and they all looked in.

"Well, Mr. Pilgrim," said Blodgett, "you appear to be making a great amount of noise here. What is the matter?"

"Looks as if there had been a pretty large shipwreck," said Simpson.

"What's the matter?" repeated Peter. "Well, I should say anybody could tell what's the matter. Do you see that leg o' mine? Well, I was trying to get it."

Blodgett looked puzzled.

"That seems to be a most singular place to hang it," he remarked musingly. "Are you in the habit of keeping it there?"

Peter was disgusted.

The matter-of-fact tone made him mad.

"Oh, yes, suttinly," he sputtered, "I keep it there, and on the ruff and down the well and up a tree, anywhere that's convenient."

"That's very singular," returned Blodgett. "I would imagine that those places were very inconvenient."

Peter thought so, too.

"I should say as much," he said. "Perhaps now, seeing as I didn't put that ere leg up there, p'raps yer could wenter a guess as to who did?"

"No, I have no idea," said the solemn Blodgett.

"Seems to me the thing to think of is how to get it down," observed the practical Simpson.

"The fust thing to know is who put it there," sputtered Peter, "and I can give a guess. It was one o' those mischievous boys, that's who it was."

"Which one?" asked Blodgett.

"Johnny Brown," said Peter, with great promptitude.

"Are you sure?" asked Blodgett. "If you saw him do it you should have stopped him."

"Well, he did it

nearly broke my—my limb!" she said explosively, "over it in the hall. Go and get it, you old fool, and have an end to this nonsense."

Peter did not fancy being called an old fool in the presence of everybody.

"I didn't hide no ladders," he muttered, "and point.

this!" he grunted, as he finished dressing and left the room.

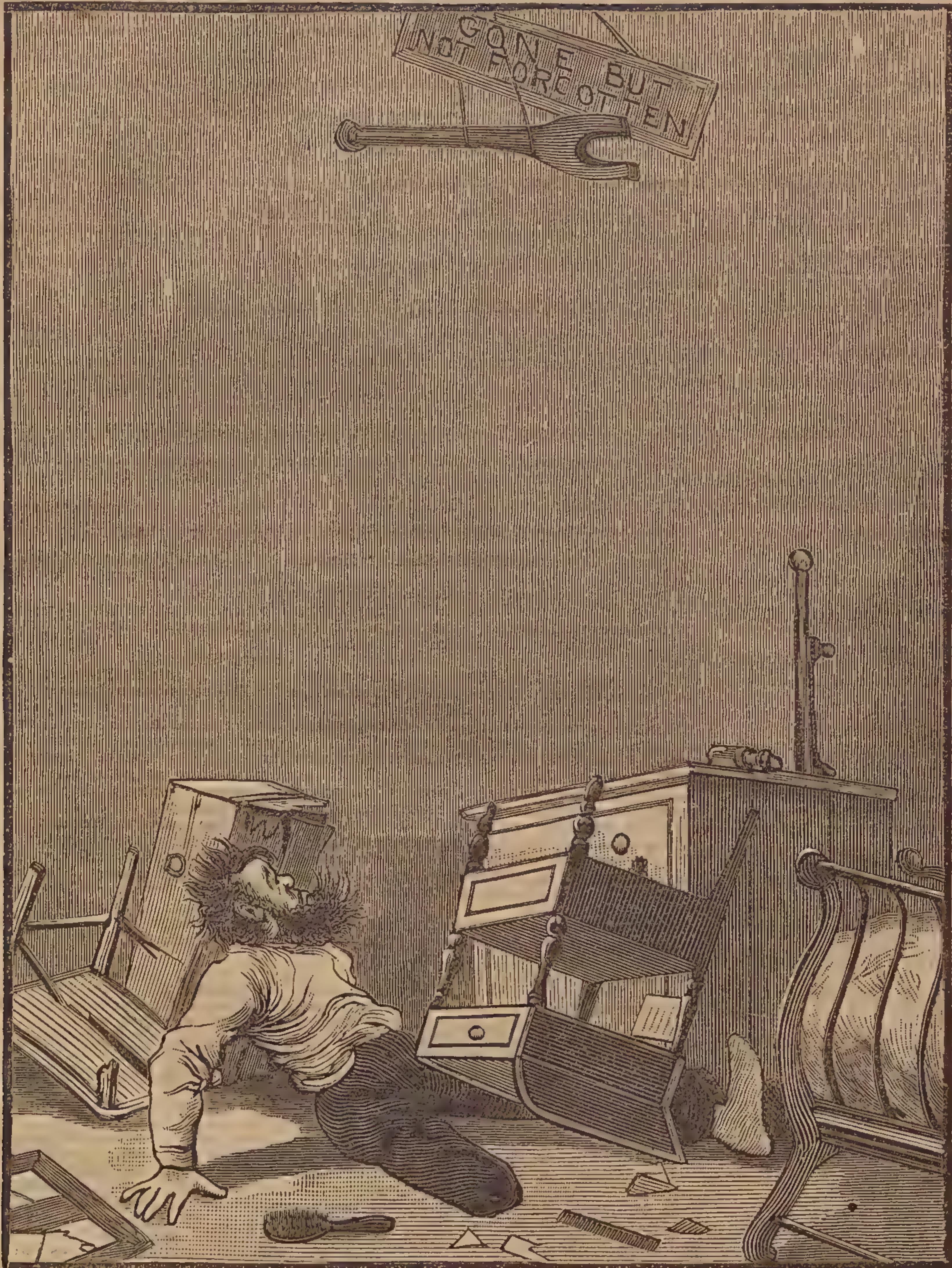
That was not all the trouble he had on account of the wooden leg, moreover.

There was more coming, for that was his weak

Well, Peter had one of that kind, and he started a fire in it when the cold snap came on.

In the afternoon it grew a bit warmer, and the fire was allowed to go down some.

Peter was in the cellar, putting around as usual.



Peter sat on the floor, his two legs, good and bad, stretched out in front of him, and gazed sadly at the ceiling. The wooden leg was still there, like the star-spangled banner we read about.

if you wasn't blind you wouldn't've run agin that one."

"Oh, well, if you know where it is you can go and get it," said Dodger spitefully, and she flounced out of the room.

The others followed her, and the old crank was left alone.

He was in for it now, sure enough, for no one would help him.

He managed to hop and stumble along till he found the ladder, and then dragged it to his apartment and set it up with a great deal of bother and trouble.

Then he got down his timber toes and strapped them on securely.

"Scuttle me if I don't sleep with it on arter

They say that you can reach a man's heart through his stomach, but the boys attacked him by way of his leg.

A few days after this latest racket, there came on a cold snap.

Not cold enough to wear sealskin overcoats, thick-as-a-board flannels, and such things, but just cold.

You didn't need any roaring fire in the furnace, either, though you wanted some.

There was one of those big, round, iron-bound stoves in the cellar, which Peter used when he did not want to get up too heavy a fire.

It was one of the sort that you have seen in country stores, with an iron rim around it, for the hayseeders to rest their feet on while they swap opinions and spit tobacco juice.

There wasn't very much to do, and the janitor concluded to take a smoke.

He lighted his pipe, drew an old wreck of an arm-chair up to the stove, cocked his wooden leg on the iron rim and puffed away in great content.

After awhile he began to doze, the pipe between his teeth, and his arms folded on his breast.

About this time Johnny and Billy came down cellar to look for apples.

There were several barrels of them stacked away, and those boys knew just where to find them.

They espied Peter first of all.

"The old snoop!" said Johnny. "Why couldn't he stay out?"

"Sh! he's asleep," whispered Billy.

"So he is."

"And do you see how he's fixed?"

"Yes."

"Watch me."

Billy sneaked up on tiptoe and never made a noise.

Then he opened all the dampers so that there was a dandy draught to the stove.

Peter snored on and never heard a sound.

Then Billy stole back to his chum and remarked:

"There will be a big change in the weather pretty soon, old man."

"Shouldn't be surprised," was Johnny's answer.

Then the brace of scamps went out.

They remained near the door, however, so as to be on hand when the fun began.

Peter snoozed on, all unconscious of danger.

The fire, having every inducement to do so, began to burn up at a lively rate.

The big cylinder got hotter and hotter every minute.

In fact, it became red hot before long.

Then it got at a white heat, and shone like a meteor in the darkened cellar.

Peter's stump rested right against it.

The same was shod with iron, so to speak, but that made no odds.

Before long it grew hot, as well as the stove.

Red hot in fact.

Then the wood began to smoke.

It did not stop at that.

Flames appeared on the end thereof.

The weather was getting warm, for a fact.

At first Peter did not mind it.

Monotony, however, wearies any one.

When the side of his face was a blister and his trousers began to scorch, the thing grew very tiresome.

He awoke with a start and jumped back.

Away went that old arm-chair, busted to eternal smash.

Peter landed on his back in the midst of the wreck.

"Hi-hi, ship ahoy! luff, you beggar, luff!" he yelled.

Then he got on his pins in a hurry.

The wooden stump snapped in two, being nearly charred through to start with, and not enjoying such a sudden strain.

Peter fell to his knees and nearly ran his nose against the red hot stove.

"Ahoy there, you lubbers!" he roared, "do you want to burn the place down?"

Then he opened the front and closed the bottom, so as to give the fire a rest.

"Scuttle and sink the whole business," he grunted, hobbling off to a cool corner. "I didn't know I left them dampers open."

His wooden leg was of no use now, except to throw at cats, and he was very much disgusted.

"Consarn it all, I've had that 'ere leg fur ten years, and it orter lasted me my lifetime. 'Spect the agents won't give me another one now without a lot o' red tape and no end o' fuss."

Johnny and Billy thought they would explode at this.

They restrained their emotions, however, until they were far enough away not to be heard by the irascible Pilgrim.

The latter did not see how he could lay the burning of his leg upon the boys, for he had not seen a sign of them.

Old Baldhead was getting weary of hearing complaints without corroborative testimony to back them out.

Consequently there was no use in blaming it on the boys.

All he could do was to go to town and get a new stump, and that's what he did.

The story got around, of course.

Johnny and Billy were not the boys to keep a good thing like that to themselves.

Pepper got hold of it, and the first time he met Peter he said:

"Burned yer wooden leg, did yez? Phwy wasn't it yer wooden head, faix?"

"Belay that, ye lubber," muttered Peter. "Small chance of your burning."

"Ah, go an; that's too ould. Yez want me to ax ye phwy, an' thin ye'll say I'm too green. Go an wid yer ould musty jokes."

"If you go ter foolin' with my leg like that ag'in, I'll warm ye, Irish," sputtered Peter.

"Go an, ye gawk. Yell get wan warmin' yerslf, in the nixt worruld, phwat'll make yez think that wan war a-freezin' be the differ there'll be, ye robber."

Peter thought that Pepper must have worked the gag on him, though he could not see how.

"I'll fix ye, Irish," he growled. "You'll be sorry ye burned my stump."

"Go an, ye falsifier," retorted the gardener. "Do yez think I'd shtop at yer leg av I was goin' to cremate yez? Begob, I'd not leave a toe-nail or a hair av yer head av I undhertook the job."

Then he limped away, leaving Peter in doubt as

to whether or not he had better try to get even on the sawed-off.

After Peter got his new leg he went stumping around looking a shade more important than ever.

The boys let him alone for a time, however.

They had other matters to look after.

A new boy was coming to the school.

That meant business for the Society of Boomers. The expected arrival was a fellow by the name of Harris.

The fellows concluded to harass him, however, no matter what his name was.

They did not know what sort of a duck he was, but they meant to have fun with him all the same.

Pepper was to drive to the station and fetch him up.

Strange to say, Pepper failed to connect.

He had the horse hitched to the wagon and standing at the gate when Mrs. Dodger called to him to explain some errands she desired him to perform.

When he returned to the gate horse and wagon were gone.

"Begob, that horse must be in a hurry," remarked the runt. "Faix, av he thinks he knows the road to the dippo and phwat to do better than me, he can go alone and do the job, so he can. Faix, I'm allus havin' trouble wid the baste, so I am."

Johnny, Billy and Sam had gone away with the horse and wagon.

It was a half holiday with them, and they meant to enjoy it.

While Pepper walked to town to look for the missing team, they drove and seemed to enjoy it.

When the train arrived they all stood on the platform watching the passengers alight.

"Let's see if we can guess who the new fellow is," said Johnny.

"That's easy enough," said Sam. "Here he comes now."

A boy of sixteen, neatly dressed and carrying a hand-satchel, had just descended to the platform.

"How are you, Harris?" said Sam, walking up to him. "We have come to take you to the institute."

"You're very kind," said the boy, with a smile, "but my name isn't Harris, and I'm home from school on a holiday. Ta-ta, old fellow."

Then the boy walked to the end of the platform, entered an elegant carriage and drove off.

"Sold," said Billy. "Ah! here is our man. Watch me brace him."

A tall, lean, lank, slab-sided youth of very rural appearance, with red cheeks, nearly white hair, and faded blue eyes, approached.

His clothes fitted him too quick; there being a blatus between the tops of his shoes and the bottoms of his trousers, and a wide gap separating his suspender buttons and the flaps of his waistcoat.

He wore a hat much too large for him, and carried a big carpet bag stuffed to repletion, a huge umbrella, a paper parcel, a shawl strap and a square wooden box.

"Hallo, Harris!" said Billy, as the youth, scrambled towards him. "Come to school have you? Well, we are waiting for you. Yonder is the professor," pointing to Johnny. "Go and slap him on the back."

"Hol! guess yu're away off," said the rustic. "My name hain't Harris an' I ben't goin' tu seule. I've come down to make my Aunt Sally a visit."

"Fooled!" remarked young Brown, as Billy looked sad and the countryman vanished. "Where in time is our fellow, anyhow?"

The baggage-men were now running out three huge trunks, a champagne basket fastened with a strap, two hat boxes, a russet leather valise, a bundle of canes and umbrellas tied together, and two little hand-bags, all of which they piled together by themselves.

"Take caw of that bawg, fellah," said a starchy-looking dude, who was looking on. "It's got my cigawettes in it. Look out, you monkey, and don't slam that one so hawd. Do you want to bweak all my pawfumewy flasks?"

"Gweat Scott, what have we heah?" whispered Johnny to his chums.

"A dude drummer."

"The swell boarder at the hotel."

"The lineal descendant of the race of baboons."

"A holy terror."

The dude seemed to be a combination of all these.

He was gotten up without regard to expense, taste, or conformity to good ideas.

He wore lavender trousers, a white plush vest, a wide wale sack of brown cloth, a fawn-colored overcoat, a black derby, a three-inch choker, a red puffed scarf, rings on every finger, and green gaiters over his patent-leather, square-toed shoes.

He was a dude from the newest fashion plates, and ought to have been wrapped in cotton; he was so precious.

He was tall and slim, did not appear to be over sixteen, and had just the faintest suspicion of what might by a great stretch of the imagination and a fine display of courtesy, be called a mustache.

He was the last one to leave the train which now moved away, the baggage having all been put out.

All the other passengers had left the station, and our boys were greatly puzzled.

"I say," whispered Johnny, "you may think me an idiot, but I'll bet that this is our fellow."

"Go take a walk!"

"Come down, birdie."

"You've been moonstruck."

"Go call a hearse."

"All right," said Johnny, "but I'm going to brace him nevertheless."

Then he walked up to the dude, tipped his hat and said:

"Beg pardon, but were you looking for some one from Blodgett's school?"

The dude put a glass in his eye, surveyed Johnny from head to foot and then drawled:

"Beg pawdon, sah, but I don't know you, don't yah know."

"Ah, excuse me," said Johnny, with a grin. "I am Johnny Brown, the worst boy in town, and a pupil of Blodgett's. These are my friends, Billy Bounce of Hustleton, and Sam Bemis of Nowhere, likewise pupils of Blodgett's. You are Mr. Harris?"

"Yas, that is my name. I expect to wead law with pwoessah, that is, if the suwoundings suit and the sahciety is congenial, don't yah know."

"Oh, you'll find that tip top," said Johnny, soberly.

"Yas, I hope so, but nothing like what yah find in Euwope. Heah is my luggage. Did you bwing a twap to fetch it?"

"We didn't bring a freight car," chuckled Johnny, "only a wagon. We thought you'd have just a trunk."

"One twunk!" gasped the dude. "Why, I wequah one twunk faw my shawts and undahwaiah alone. One twunk! Why, do you take me faw a twamp?"

"No, for a big flat," thought Johnny.

"The second twunk has my dwess clothes, and the thawd my wegulah ones, don't yah know, and then I must have a case faw my collahs and scawis, and anothah faw my handkahchiefs and ewavats. One twunk! Gweat hevvens!"

"What are we going to do with this fellow?" whispered Johnny, taking his chums aside.

"Kill him."

"We've no use for him at the school."

"So young, and such a fool."

"He wanted the lunatic asylum, not Blodgett's."

"Let's ship him back to the city, C. O. D."

"Too late, here comes Pepper."

"Then we'll have to take him."

"Ye gawds! that I should live to see this!" exclaimed Johnny.

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT was to be done with the dude?

Killing such a creature is reckoned murder, and that could not be thought of.

Why had not the jolly boy on a vacation or the country bumpkin been the right one?

Either would have suited the boys from Blodgett's.

For this sweet-scented specimen, however, they had no earthly use.

And yet he must be taken care of.

It would take two wagons to carry his baggage to the school to start with.

"Well, Mr. Harris," said Johnny, "we'll take you up to the institute, but we can't take your baggage. You'll have to hire a truck."

"But I cahrt go without my luggage, don't yah know. I shall have to dwess faw dinnah."

"No, you won't, we eat in our shirt sleeves up at the school," said Billy.

"Weally now—why, I thought only the sons of the best families went theah."

"So they do; but we set our own fashions. We wear swallow tails in the morning, flannels at night, and have soup for breakfast."

"How vulgah."

"Not at all. We are the people, and we make the fashions. White-shirts are bad form, and red cravats are ruled out."

"And I presume I shall change all that," said Harris, complacently. "Did you bwing a cawlage faw me?"

"There it is."

"What! Wide in that? It hasn't any style at all, don't jah know."

"Then you'll have to walk," said Johnny in disgust. "Come on, boys. Pepper, hire an ox cart for his giblets."</p

"That's vewy shabby," said Harris.
"Are ye the new scholar?" asked Pepper.

"Yas."

"And are all them yer trunks?"

"I couldn't get along with less, sah."

"Faix, ye have as many as a thravelin' show, so ye have. Where do yez expect to put them?"

"In me apahtments, of cawse, fellah."

"In yer apartments, is it? Have yez hired the whole house?"

"Of cawse not, but I expect to have pwopah accommodations, don't yah know."

"Do yez think the professor is goin' to enlarge his house just for ye? Begob, ye have the cheek av a harse. The thruunks, barrin' won, for yer immajit use, I'll go down to the suller, unless Pether kicks, and he can't do much av that, seein' he has a wooden leg."

"Whatu howid place," mused Harris. "I suppose I shall have to go up and take a look at it, though, saw me mothah told me I must stay this time, don't yah know."

"Have yez a muther?" asked Pepper.

"Yas, all fellabs have mothahs, don't yah know; it isn't good fawn not to have them."

"Faix, then, I'd advise the lady to take ye home. It's not a nursery we keep, but an acade-my, faith."

"Yaw vewy funny, no doubt," drawled Harris, "but I haven't got time to study out yaw jokes. Will you get me a cab, and tell some fellah to send me luggage up to the house right away?"

"Oho-ho, will I get yez a cab?" laughed Pepper. "That's a good wan. Faix, there's nothing but the buss neow, av yez want to take that, since the byes have gon' off wid the wagon, unless yez do the same as mesilf."

"Aw, and how is that, fellah?"

"Walk!" said Peter, with a howl, as he started off.

He was as much disgusted with the dude as the boys were, and did not care to have anything to do with him.

Mr. Dude did not like the idea of walking, and he had to do that or ride in the stage.

He chose the stage.

As for his trunks and valises, he engaged a man to take them to the school at half-a-dollar apiece.

Harris had no brains, so he had to have money to compensate.

When he and his baggage appeared Blodgett was looking out the window.

"Goodness me, what's all this?" he ejaculated.

"Guess you've got three or four new scholars instead of one," remarked Simpson.

"There's only one that I can see. Why didn't he come in the wagon?"

"Well, if he owns all that baggage, I fancy that it wasn't high-toned enough for him."

"Nonsense! It's good enough for the rest of the boys and it ought to be good enough for him." "I'm merely making a supposition," retorted Simpson.

The two now went to the door and met Harris as he was coming up the steps.

"Good-aftahnoon," said the dude, addressing Whiskers. "This is Professah Blodgett, I pwe-sume?"

"You presume altogether too much then," said Simpson. "This is Professor Blodgett, but haven't you made a mistako?"

"How so?" asked the dude blankly.

"This is not a hotel."

"I didn't suppose it was. Me name is Hawis, don't yah know, and I've come heah to wound off me education a bit, don't yah know."

"It'll be a pretty good job, I guess," muttered Simpson going away.

He was a bit of a dude himself, but this fellow made him tired.

"The housekeeper will show you your room," said Blodgett, "but you will have to put the things you really need into one trunk and store the rest in the cellar or up garret."

This was awful.

Harris was staggered.

"Why, my dear sah," he stammered, "I really need them all, don't yah know? Theah isn't one I could aetchally spah, don't you know?"

"You'll have to do with one," said Blodgett. "Peter, take those trunks to the cellar, all but one, which Master Harris will select."

"Excuse me, sah," stuttered the dude, "but I have been accustomed to being called Mistah Hawis, don't you know?"

"I don't care if you've been accustomed to being called 'me lud' or 'your royal highness,'" re-turned Blodgett. "You will be Master Harris or plain Harris, if we choose, in this institute, and the sooner you get over your foolish ideas the better it will be for you."

Then old Baldy went away, and Harris felt crushed, or as nearly so as such a fool could feel.

Money talks, however, and Peter being presented with a couple of crisp dollar notes had

every one of those trunks, boxes and bags taken up to the dude's room, though there wasn't room for much else when they were stowed away in it.

The members of the firm of Johnny Brown & Co. were disgusted with the dude, and Johnny remarked:

"There's no fun in roasting a fellow like that. Just let him alone. We can get fun enough without bothering with him."

There was no doubt about that.

Johnny and his chums could get all the sport they wanted when they made up their minds to it.

If one person could not afford it for them, another one could.

This time it happened to be Pepper.

The little runt was up in a tree one afternoon picking apples.

They were of a choice variety, and Blodgett did not want them bruised by falling to the ground.

Therefore Pepper had a long ladder and a basket, and as he picked the fruit he laid them carefully in the receptacle provided for the purpose, as they say of ash-barrels.

Well, along came the boys while he was at his work.

"He did not observe them, having his attention fixed 'en the apples.

His application to business prevented him from seeing them.

They twiggled him, however, up in the branches.

They were wise enough to keep out of sight, moreover.

A whispered consultation took place, and thus the boys got to work.

Johnny picked up a hard little apple and tossed it in the air.

He threw it so that it would come down on Pepper's head.

It did so, and in good earnest.

Pepper started, shook the tree, and fetched a big apple right down on his noddle.

"Begob, yez might have sted there till I wor ready to pick yez," he muttered, rubbing his cranium.

Then Billy gave an encore of the same act.

Once more Pepper got a crack on the knowledge box.

This time the apple was bigger and thrown with more force.

Resultantly, Pepper indulged in more violent gymnastics.

Half a dozen big, fat apples came bouncing down on him.

They hit him on the head, in the eyes and on his nose.

The pain caused him to give the tree another shake.

Down came more apples from the top.

Pepper, being no scholar, had considerable trouble with the higher branches.

"Hurro! shtop that neow!" he roared, rubbing his head. "Faix, them apples do be makin' me as much throuble as they did Adam and Eve in the garden."

Johnny now picked out a good spot and sent an apple flying straight at the mark.

It peppered Pepper in the back of the neck.

"Begob, that's a queer place for an apple to fall," he muttered.

Then he glanced all around, but by this time Johnny was out of sight.

When Pepper's head was turned, Billy let fly another cholera pill and took him in the ear.

Then there came a regular fusillade of green apples.

Pepper was done on all sides like a doughnut.

He was done up brown, too.

"Howly Moses! I'm kilt!" he howled, sliding down the ladder.

The boys dodged out of sight and Pepper didn't see one of them.

"Be the powers, it do be rainin' apples, I'm thinkin'," he growled. "That I'll do? The boss tould me not to let the apples fall, but how can I help it when they do be comin' deown av their own will, begob?"

The storm seemed to have ceased for a time, however.

"Faix, I think I'd better thry it agin," mused Pepper. "I've got to have them all picked anny-how."

This time he shifted the ladder and went to the top.

The apples could not fall on his head this time, surely.

He could see the boys, too, if they came out.

He had not suspected them so far, however.

Well, he got to work again, and for a time nothing happened.

That was simply because the boys were shifting their positions.

Johnny got around behind him, laid in a supply of ammunition and let fly.

Biff, bang, whack!

Crack, shat, whang!

Thud, whish, ping!

Poor Pepper got it hot and heavy.

He gave one terrific howl, let go his hold of the ladder and took a plunge forward.

Terrific leap for life by the renowned European artist!

If the fairies were not always good to the Irish poor Pepper would have broken his neck.

He dove, head first, down into the tree, looking like a big frog taking a plunge.

He caught on one of the lower branches, swung around, slipped, and came to the ground, sitting on a pile of weary-looking apples.

That was one way of making a elder press.

"Some wan's been makin' n fool av me," he remarked. "Thim apples niver dhropped an me, they wor t'rown, so they wor."

Then he got up and walked to the edge of the orchard.

Peter Pilgrim was stumping across the lawn toward the house.

"Oho-ho, the robber!" muttered Pepper; "it wor him phwat done it. Faix, I'll give him wan bombardmint, so I will, and tache him betther manners."

Thereupon he gathered an armful of apples from the ground right around him.

Big, little, ripe, rotten or green, it made no difference.

Indeed, I would not be surprised if he got a few stones mixed in.

Then he opened fire on Peter.

The first one thrown was rotten.

It spread itself all over Peter's neck.

The next one was as hard as a rock.

It raised a bump which phrenology had never put there.

It was followed by two ripe apples, a rotten one, two hard ones, and a stone.

Peter had by this time become aware that something was going on.

Some of the missiles missed him but more hit him.

He supposed, of course, that the boys were having some sport at his expense.

He turned quickly around, so as to catch them at it.

An over-ripe apple took him in the nose and made him see double.

Then, instead of the boys, he discovered Pepper in the act.

"Ha-ha, come on, ye maraudher, come on neow, and have it eout," yelled the little gardener.

"What's the matter of you?" cried Peter. "What in time are you bombardin' me fur, ye lubber?"

Pepper's supply of apples had given out, but he came on just the same.

"Yez don't like tit for tat, do yez?" he asked.

"What yer talkin' about, ye runt?"

"Yez don't like the shoe on the other fut, do yez?"

"I ain't got any other foot, ye green Mick."

"It's not so funny phwin I take a hand, is it, Pether?"

"What ain't so funny, yer lubber?"

"Trowin' apples at a mon b hind his back."

"What yer been doin' it fur, blast yer red head!"

"For vengeance, begob!"

"Who's been botherin' yer?"

"Ye have."

"Avast there, ye sculpin'! I ain't done nothin' to yer."

"Yez have thin."

"No, I ain't."

"Yez have. Yez pilted me wid apples when I was up in the trees an' couldn't help mesilf."

"Belay that, yer greeny, I never—"

"Yez did, begob!"

"I didn't."

"I know betther. Ye med me nearly break me neck be fallin', and whin I got up I seen yez thryin' to sneak away, luckin' so innocent like."

"Get out, ye greenhorn!"

"That's phwat I pasted ye fur, ye wooden-legged ould curiosity. How d'yez like it?"

"Never touched yer."

"Ye're a loiar, yez did. Ye trowed the apples at me, and that—"

"Why, blow up and sink yer old rotten hulk

Once he took a stand he would not budge from it.

"Yez can't sneak out av it," he growled. "Ye hit me wid apples and med me fail, and if the master growls bekase the fruit do be bruised, I'll tell him the raison neow, Mr. Pether."

Then Pepper went away convinced that he had the best of the argument.

Peter Pilgrim did not feel at all satisfied, however.

He had got decidedly the worst of it, and could not see why.

Pepper went back to his apple picking, and was not molested.

That assured him that Peter was the guilty party.

Was it not addressed to "my dear Mr. Pilgrim?" Did it not wind up "your true friend?" Of course it was genuine.

"It's them lubbers of boys what's up to mischief again," observed Peter, "and this gentleman has found it out and give me warning."

Please observe that he said "this gentleman" in referring to the writer of the note.

If he had said "this chump," he would have doubted its authenticity.

He never did.

Instead, he swallowed the whole business, as a sucker swallows all your bait.

"Something goin' ter happen, hey?" he chuckled, winking his off eye. "Well, I'll be there to nab the young rascals."

It was not time for them to arrive just yet. Peter sat down on his hunkies in the hogshead and waited.

Ten minutes passed, and he kept on waiting. Suddenly, when half an hour had fled, he continued to wait.

It was tedious work sitting cooped up in a hogshead waiting for something to happen.

Before he knew it he fell asleep.

The more he slept the more he wanted to.

Then he began to snore.

He was a good fast at it, and devoted all his time and energy to it.

That was the signal that the boys were waiting for.



Johnny raised his bucket and rested it on the rim of the hogshead. The others did likewise, all in a circle. Then Johnny gave his pail a hoist and a tip. So did all the rest. "Let her go!" he remarked.

"I got aven wid the vilyan, annyhow," he muttered with great satisfaction, "and he won't be affer playin' anny more av his funny thricks on me."

As for Johnny and his chums, they enjoyed the whole thing hugely, the more so because they had not been suspected of having had anything to do with the little fracas.

Just about now the boys concluded to play another lark on Peter.

They were ahead of him on the score and were sure to win the pennant, but they just wanted to keep their hands in.

Johnny and Billy fixed up the snap, and it promised to be a dandy one.

Peter got a letter the next afternoon which ran thusly:

"MY DEAR MR. PILGRIM,—Something is going to happen to-night, and you want to be on the watch. It will take place between the barn and the house at about half-past ten. If you are on hand you will catch the offenders. Be sure and be there, for something is going to happen."

"YOUR TRUE FRIEND."

Peter looked solemn when he read the note.

Here was a chance to distinguish himself.

He never doubted for an instant the veracity of the note.

You can go heavy on it that he would be there. He was there, for a fact, and ahead of time.

"Between the house and the barn," he ruminated. "Wall, I reckon that hogshead'll be a good lookout. I'll see them and they won't see me, and I'll overhaul 'em sure."

The hogshead in question was near the corner of the house in the rear.

It was used to catch rain water in.

Just at present it was empty.

It would make an elegant hiding-place.

The night was cold and blustering, and the hogshead would afford protection from the wind.

Consequently, Peter regarded it with considerable favor.

He looked all around and listened attentively. He couldn't see a soul.

Neither could he hear one.

The coast was clear.

"H'm that's all right," he remarked.

Then he climbed to the top of the butt and dropped in.

He was as snug as he could desire.

Just then the clock in the steeple struck ten.

The hour approached, ha, ha!"

Nothing else did, however.

The boys had been watching him, but they kept still.

When Johnny and Billy heard it they called the other fellows.

Then all hands sneaked to the barn.

Behind it were several big water-pails.

There was also a hogshead of water.

The boys had provided both during the day.

There were seven or eight boys and as many pails.

Each grabbed a pail and filled it with water.

Then they marched in single file to the hogshead observatory of Mr. Peter Pilgrim.

Nobody said a word, but from the expression on their several mugs it was easy to see what they thought.

They reached the butt and gathered around it.

The moon was shining at her very best, and there was light enough to see everything.

A snore came from within the hogshead.

The sentinel was asleep on his post.

Johnny raised his bucket and rested it on the rim of the hogshead.

The others did likewise, all in a circle.

Then Johnny gave his pail a hoist and a tip.

So did all the rest.

"Let her go!" he remarked.

She went.

CHAPTER X.

PETER PILGRIM asleep at the bottom of a big hogshead waiting for something to happen.

It did.

A few naughty boys on the outside of the hogshead, each with a big bucket of water in his fist.

You can just bet that something happened.

Every drop of that water went into the hogshead.

Then every boy lighted out, taking his pail with him.

Johnny left a little note pinned to the hogshead. When the boys disappeared, Peter popped up.

The water nearly floated him up to the top.

At first he thought he was in swimming, and began to strike out.

Both maintained a discreet silence on the subject.

One thing Peter did know, however.

That was that he was catching more cold every second.

"Woo-oo! The Boobers, hey?" growled Peter through his nose. "I'll bet a cent it was Johddy Browd and theb chubs of his thad pud ub the-wish-chew!"

Then he got a fit of sneezing that nearly took his head off.

"Sobething has habbed, hey? Well, I should say there—wow-fur-shoo-wich!"

The night was cold, and Peter was getting chilled by inches.

Before long his wooden leg would be frozen stiff.

In fact, nobody liked the dude, because he was such a donkey.

He was not quite so big a fool as he tried to make out, however.

There were a few grains of sense left in his noddle, and he resolved to bring them into use.

He guessed who the boys were who had annoyed Peter, and he determined to play a snap on the old crank himself.

At the same time he would see that suspicion fell upon those boys.

The same were Johnny, Billy, Sam and one or two others.

He got hold of some big books, dictionaries, etcetera, that belonged to those boys.



When the boys disappeared, Peter popped up. The water nearly floated him up to the top. At first he thought he was in swimming, and began to strike out. He looked like a drowned rat. The water ran off of him in rivers.

He looked like a drowned rat.

The water ran off of him in rivers.

If he wasn't a dandy-looking old codger, I wouldn't say it.

He looked like Venus rising from the waves...

He could give Aphrocrite points and still beat her, however.

Venus never could look so lovely as he looked.

Nor feel so wet.

He choked, he sputtered, he sneezed and he gasped.

"Great guns! did I strike a water spout?"

It was no wonder he asked the question.

The butt was half full of water and it seemed to be rising.

Peter got out of that as soon as he could.

He shivered and shook and sneezed till he nearly loosened his wooden leg.

Then he saw something white sticking to the hogshead.

He took it off.

It was a note.

This is what it said:

"DEAR PETE.—Something did happen, you bet!"

"THE BOOMERS."

"Who in the name o' thunderation are the Boomers?" asked Peter of the hogshead, or perhaps of the moon.

Away he went back to the house, sneezing at the rate of two knots an hour.

Something had happened sure enough.

Peter did not feel very cheerful over it, moreover.

It was those boys again beyond a doubt.

How would he ever be able to come up with them?

He nearly sneezed his clothes off when he reached his apartment.

He lost no time in getting into bed, and then he shook so hard that the thing nearly doubled up with him, as iron bedsteads will do sometimes.

He didn't get warmed through till nearly morning, and when he arose his head felt as big as a tub.

He was mad enough to chew hay, and was ready for any revenge.

As nothing else came into his head, he swore that four or five of the boys had gone out the night before and had left the back door open.

He named the culprits, and they got a basting.

Neither Johnny nor Billy were on the list.

The dude was, although he had been asleep all night.

It made no difference how he denied the accusation.

He got a licking all the same, and nobody felt sorry.

Then he went to Peter's room when that worthy was out.

Climbing upon a chair, he left the door ajar and put the books on top.

After this he got down, put the chair away and made his exit by the window.

It was not very long afterwards that Peter had occasion to go to his room to change his clothes after working at the furnace.

Harris knew this and had timed his little snap to meet the circumstances.

Peter stumped along, never thinking of looking up.

When he reached his room he opened the door with a bang.

Down came the books all in a heap.

A big Latin dictionary took him on the cocoanut.

An atlas of the world carromed off his nose.

A huge grammar whacked him on one ear.

A gigantic philosophy hit him on the other.

It was a regular educational bombardment.

Poor Peter was literally staggered, and went down like a shot.

For a few moments he did not know if he were walking or riding.

Then he looked up.

There was nothing in sight.

At his feet were the books, and he quickly twigged them.

He also realized how they came there.

Out came his big spectacles, and open went the books.

Johnny Brown's name was on the fly-leaf of the dictionary.

Billy Bounce had put his signature in the atlas. The grammar belonged to Sam.

Tom owned the book on physical science.

Peter looked triumphant as he beheld this damaging evidence.

He gathered up the books, put them under his arm and went off to Blodgett.

The case was laid before the latter in its enormity.

The books were brought in evidence.

They looked as though they had taken a tumble.

There were bruises on Peter's noble countenance as well.

In fact it looked bad for the boys.

The next day Blodgett confronted them with the evidence of their guilt.

They denied it, of course.

They might have saved themselves the trouble.

Every one of them got a whaling.

Peter was happy and so was the dude.

Young Harris had squared himself for the licking he had received.

Peter had caught those bad boys in the act, as he supposed, and got them licked.

The boys did not feel so hilarious.

"I'll bet that old Stumps stole the books and made up the whole business," said Johnny.

"I suppose he is satisfied, now that we have had a welting," added Billy.

"I am not then."

"No more am I."

"Let's give him a dandy racket."

"It's a go."

"We'll make him sick of lying about us, the old curmudgeon."

"Bet your shoestrings."

The boys were working for vengeance now, and not for fun alone.

They never once suspected the dude.

No one supposed he had brains enough for that.

No, old Peter got all the blame.

Johnny and his partners would get even with him, however.

They just put their heads together so as to get up a rousing reception for the old crank.

The weather was getting colder, for the time of roast turkeys and pumpkin pies was coming, and warmer garments became not only a luxury but a necessity.

It was going to be cold weather for P. Pilgrim, Esq., and the boys did not intend that he should forget it if they worked their points properly.

It happened quite accidentally that while they were looking for a good snap on Peter, one came along without being hunted for.

This was how it came about.

Three or four of the boys, including Johnny Brown, were going along the road towards town one afternoon.

School was out and the boys were going to the village.

A small animal, somewhat resembling a cat, suddenly ran across the road a few yards in front of them.

The boys raised a shout and the little creature hid in the stone wall alongside the road.

The animal was a skunk.

The boys had no desire to form any closer acquaintance with him.

Johnny happened to glance over his shoulder just then, and saw Peter stumping along not far behind.

"Here's one for his nibbs," he remarked. "Go slow and be very much interested in what I say."

"All right. Let her go."

"Yes, the stuff is perfectly safe," said Johnny aloud, "and no one will suspect us."

"Of course they won't."

"We hid it too well for that."

"And won't we have a dandy racket with it?"

"Well, you bet."

Peter had heard enough to excite his curiosity.

He wanted to know more at once.

The boys had some secret that must be discovered.

They were up to mischief, without a doubt.

What was it they had hidden and that they expected to have a fine racket with?

It must be whiskey or liquor of some kind.

That's what he generally went on a racket with himself.

He must know more about this business.

Consequently he put on his big specs and followed.

The boys were very much absorbed, apparently, and did not hear him coming.

At least Peter thought they did not.

"Yes, we'll leave it there for a time and then dig it up."

"And surprise everybody."

"Old Peter among the rest, eh, boys?"

"Oh, he'll never know anything about it."

"It's safe in the wall as long as we keep quiet."

Now was Peter's turn.

He was right behind them.

"What's safe, you lubbers?" he demanded in gruff tones.

The boys turned, stood still, and seemed very much broke up.

"What are you been and hid?" asked Peter, sternly.

"Nothing," said Johnny.

"Yes, it is, and I want to know. You're up to some deviltry, and if yer don't tell me I'll blow on yer to Blodgett."

"It ain't anything, I tell you!"

"Yes, it is. I heard yer say yer hid it and was going on a racket with it. What is it?"

"Don't tell Blodgett," said Johnny.

"But I will tell Blodgett. Where is it?"

"Go and find it."

"I'll get every one on yer licked," threatened Peter, "if yer don't tell me where you've hid the stuff."

"Well, it's in the wall, there!" said Johnny, doggedly.

"Whereabouts in the wall?"

"Where the white stone is."

"If yer lying ye'll get it just the same, remember."

"I ain't lying. It's in the wall. If you want it go get it."

Peter stumped off toward the place indicated.

"You bet he'll get it," remarked Johnny in a low tone.

"Yes, sir, and solid."

"Let's mosey."

The boys got out of the way pretty sudden.

Peter stumped up to the wall and laid hold of the white stone.

He gave it a tug and out it came.

Something else came out with it.

The skunk's breath.

He got it hot and strong.

His glasses alone saved his eyes, but they were no good after it.

The strong decoration with which they were covered nearly melted them.

Peter gave a howl and keeled over backwards.

The skunk fled, but his memory was as strong as ever.

The terrible odor actually warped Peter's wooden leg it was so strong.

Old Pegtoes thought a sewer had exploded.

He keeled over on his back as flat as a pancake and remained there for five minutes.

The boys got some of the smell, although the wind was blowing from them.

They got out of that very sudden.

As for Peter, he was saturated.

If he had had ten heavy colds he could not help but smell the awful stench.

He got up, at length, looking very pale, and looked for the boys.

They were not to be seen.

"Wall, if that's the thing they hid in the wall, they've got more narve than I have," he muttered.

Then he stumped it back to the house feeling very weary.

He was too much busted up to think of revenge even.

Of course he realized that the boys must have played a trick on him, though how they did it went ahead of his reckoning.

If they had taken that skunk and tucked it away for his benefit, they had too much moral courage for him.

Boys who could do that and come out unscathed, were more than a match for him.

He walked back to the house, carrying his perfume with him, and tried to get in unobserved.

It was no go.

Simpson twigged him, and said:

"What in thunder are you bringing that skunk in the house for? Throw him away."

"I ain't bringin' him in, sir. I haven't got any skunk."

"Don't you suppose I can tell a skunk when I smell it?" asked the angry tutor.

"Yes, sir, but I haven't got him. He ran away arter payin' me his respec's."

Simpson laughed ready to cry.

"Go bury your clothes and yourself," he said.

"You'll never get rid of the stink till you do."

The janitor burned the duds instead of burying them.

He put them in the furnace, and the smell went all over the house.

Blodgett and the boys were ready to murder him for it.

The boys declared that he did it on purpose to get square on them.

They asked Harris if he had upset a bottle of perfumery and threatened to bounce him.

Harris knew nothing about the skunk episode, and protested his innocence very innocently.

Peter chuckled when the boys growled, though the stench drove him out of the house as well as the rest.

"That gag was not altogether a success," remarked Johnny, the next day. "We must get up another."

"Peter tumbled to us, of course," returned one of the boys, "and had another one ready for us right away."

"We'll fix him the next time."

"You may well say so." In the meantime the dude, having succeeded so well in his previous joke on Peter and the boys, determined to try it on once more.

Nobody suspected him, and he was therefore quite safe.

He puzzled the thing that he called his brain for some time, and at last hit upon what he considered a most bewilderingly brilliant idea.

It might be a trifle old but it was pretty good for him after all.

The brilliant idea was carried out in this fashion.

First he snooped around in the boys' rooms and collared a handkerchief belonging to Johnny, a towel owned by Billy, a pillow case with Sam's initials on it, a napkin which owned Tom for a master, and various and sundry other articles all marked with their owners' names or initials.

Then he waited till he Peter was in the land of nod and stole down to the old stumpjack's room.

He carried a tiny candle set in a sconce so that the light would not shine all over the room.

Peter was sleeping away like a good fellow and snoring to match.

The dude first gagged his victim with Johnny's handkerchief.

Then he fastened his good ankle to the bed post by means of Billy's towel.

Sam's pillow case inclosed his head, and Tom's napkins tied his hands together.

All this required a good deal of lifting and pulling of course.

Peter began to wake up, naturally.

The dude kept right on, however, till he had made everything tight and fast and then he dusted.

Peter kicked in more ways than one at this treatment.

He couldn't kick himself loose.

He also tried to yell, but nobody heard him.

He did manage to get the handkerchief out of his mouth, but even then the pillow case was tied over his head and nearly smothered him.

By dint of great perseverance he kicked his leg free of its bonds, but that was all.

Not having great dexterity with his toes, he was unable to untie his hands, and had to let them stay tied.

He could yell, however, and he did for all he was worth.

After a long time he succeeded in arousing Pepper.

The latter thought the old crank was going to put up a job on him, and so he called Simpson.

Whiskers was very mad at being waked up at four in the morning.

He went with Pepper, however, to Peter's room. Thus they found out what had been done.

It was quite clear that Peter could not have trussed himself up in that fashion.

He was not magician enough for that.

If he had succeeded in getting off the whole of his fastenings his story might not have been believed.

Now, there was no doubt of its truth.

He had always thought they were smart lads. This thing proved them to be the biggest kind of chumps.

"The idea of using their own things, marked with their own names," he observed.

It seemed asinine to the last degree.

"They ought to get thumped in the collar-button!" observed the English master in choice phrases.

Oh, he was a daisy linguist, he was.

Well, old Peter told his little story to Blodgett. Simpson and Pepper corroborated his tale.

It looked bad for the boys.

The evidence, as in another case, was most convincing.

That's what made Whiskers mad.

"They got caught once," he mused, "and now they get nabbed again in just the same way."

Consequently Simpson felt no sympathy for them.

He just hoped that they would get licked.

His hopes were realized.

The boys got a daisy larruping.

They felt saddest when they sat down for two days afterward.

Then they held a council of war.

"Something must be done," said Billy.

"Old Peter is getting the bulge on us."

"He never could have tied himself up in that style."

"Of course not."

"Perhaps he didn't even tumble the books on his head."

"Well, and what then?"

"Somebody has been playing roots on him."

"Of course."

"And making it seem as if we were the fellows."

"Oh! I see a hole through a brick now!"

"That's the Ethiopian in the wood-pile, is it?"

"You bet!"

The whole thing was clear now.

Somebody had been doing them up and getting square on Peter besides.

Who could it be?

That was the conundrum.

"It isn't one of our own crowd, that's certain," said Johnny.

"No, for we all caught it alike."

"Who is it, then?"

"Some one not in the gang," said Johnny.

"Then let him look out for squalls."

"You bet!"

The Boomers were on the warpath!

CHAPTER XI.

SOMEBODY had played two dandy rackets on Johnny Brown & Co.

It was Harris, the dude.

Johnny and his chums did not know this.

They did not even suspect it.

They knew that somebody had done them up twice, however, and they meant to find out who it was.

All the boys at Blodgett's were not friendly to them.

Perhaps one of the discontented ones had put up this job.

They must find out, therefore, which one of these it was.

Harris was the last one they would have suspected.

They did not suppose that he had sense enough.

His gags might be wormy, but they got there just the same.

Twice had they hit the mark, and twice had the boys suffered.

The last time they knew that Peter was innocent.

The question to be settled then was who the guilty party was.

They wanted to find him very much.

They intended to make him a dandy present.

A stuffed club was the article selected.

He would get it in the neck.

Harris, having done so well, decided to try again.

He evidently supposed that he would never be found out.

That's where he was in error.

You couldn't fool Johnny Brown and his pals forever.

They were bound to take a drop at last.

However, Harris thought he could venture once more.

He did, and this is how he did it.

He collared Johnny Brown's overcoat one night off the hall-rack, got an old pair of pants and a hat and rigged up the figure of a man.

He stuffed it with straw and made him look quite plump, just like Johnny himself.

Then he went down-stairs at night while Peter was fooling with the furnace and stuck the effigy bolt upright on Peter's bed.

He then waited in the hall till the janitor came up.

He waited to see how the thing worked.

Peter came stumping along with a candle in his hand.

Harris wanted to chuckle, but he kept quiet.

Peter went into his room and Harris peered through a crack.

The cranky janitor was by no means brave, be it understood.

The minute he saw that figure on the bed, he gave a howl.

Then he dropped the candle and bolted out of the room.

He upset the dude, of course, and they both went down kerflop.

The dude was the first to recover himself.

He did not care to know what happened next.

Away he went, satisfied at having escaped detection.

Up to bed he slipped, barking his shins against various things in the dark.

First, he got into Billy's room by mistake.

Young Bounce awoke, and wanted to know what was up.

"Beg pardon, I'm shaw," said the dude. "I had to go to the bawth-woom, don't yah know, and lost me way."

"That's all right," said Billy. "Go to bed and don't wake any one else up, or you'll catch it."

"Yas, so I suppose," drawled Harris, as he went out.

This time he found his room without trouble.

He had to tumble over his trunks before he could find the bed, however, and that made more noise.

Sam Bemis had the next room to his, and the dude's noise awoke him.

"Cheese it there, Harris," said Sam, "or you'll have Peter going on a pilgrimage after you."

"Yas, vewy good," chuckled the Slim. "I weckon Petah has had all the fun he wants faw one night, don't yah know."

"Oh, go to sleep," growled Sam, as he proceeded to do the same himself.

Peter meanwhile was having a fine time.

"Drat them boys!" he sputtered. "The young lubbers are up to mischief again, sink 'em."

Then he got up and advanced cautiously.

"That was one on 'em ran out and upset me, but maybe there's more."

It was all dark and he could see nothing.

He felt along the wall, however, till he found the door.

Then he turned the knob and went in.

The moonlight, entering at the window, showed him the figure sitting on the bed.

"Douse my tarpaulins!" muttered Peter, getting his nautical terms mixed.

Then he bounced out, shutting the door after him.

"I've got ye now, scuttle yer jib sheets!" he growled.

No boy was going to get out of that room if he knew it.

He would stand on guard all night if necessary.

Down he sat on the floor with his back to the door and a grim determination within.

Just let anybody try to get out now.

He sat there for some time before a new thought struck him.

Suppose the fellow on the bed went out the window?

He would escape, of course.

"Great hurricanes! I never thought o' that!" he exclaimed.

It must not be, of course.

He accordingly arose, opened the door and looked in.

The fellow was still sitting on the bed.

"Look here, young man," said Pegtoes, "when you've got done settin' on that 'ere bunk, I'll trouble ye to get out."

One would have supposed that the detected youth would have said something.

He did not open his head.

"There's no use tryin' ter bluff me," continued Peter, "cos ye can't. I'm an old sea dog, I am."

The fellow evidently had no objection to this.

"Come now, ye young sculpin, ye want ter get off that bunk, or I'll shake ye off."

The threat had no effect whatever.

Then Peter did the think act once more.

Perhaps the boy was asleep!

Peter's wooden leg felt the agitation, even, that this idea produced.

"I'll wake him up, you bet," muttered old Stumpjack.

Then he made one dash for the figure sitting in the moonlight.

The moment Peter grabbed it there was a collapse.

Pegtoes sprawled over the bed in a jiffy.

The intruder was all broken up.

When Peter tumbled to the deception practised upon him he was very mad.

"I don't want to repeat what he said for fear I would frighten off what little hair I have left."

At any rate it was good, forcible Anglo-Saxon. Peter lighted his candle and investigated the figure.

It was Johnny Brown's overcoat, that was certain.

The rest of the apparel could not be identified.

The coat was enough for Peter's purpose, however.

"I'll pay that young Jackdandy off for this run," grunted Peter, "and in good hard coin, too. If he can sit down fur a week without thinking o' me, I want ter know it."

Then Peter laid aside the tell-tale coat and sought his downy spring bed.

In the morning he told his little tale to Blodgett.

He also produced the effigy to substantiate his narrative.

Everybody knew that ulster.

Besides that, it had Johnny's name sewed on the inside of the collar.

The boys began to weep for Johnny.

Of course they knew that he would never have been such a big chump as to put his own coat on the dummy.

It was simply another gag.

He was likely to get walloped all the same.

However, his good luck came to his rescue this time.

Blodgett called his name and asked him to step out.

"Brown isn't here," said Whiskers. "He's been sick for two days."

So he had, and he was in bed at that minute.

The housekeeper said that she knew he had not left his bed all night.

That settled it.

Johnny did not get the licking that Peter expected he would.

Harris was also disappointed.

He had not heard a word about Johnny's being sick.

However, he considered it a good joke on Peter as it stood.

So it was.

There was another aspect to the affair, though. Billy Bounce remembered that the dude had been out of his rooms after hours.

He said that he had been to the bath-room.

That might be so or it might be a taradiddle.

Sam Beniess remembered that Harris had said something about Peter's having had fun enough for one night.

Peter had declared that he had stumbled over one of the boys in coming hastily out of his room.

The boys held a consultation and put this and that together.

"I've got it," said Billy, when Sam told his little story.

"Well?" they all said.

"The dude is the culprit."

"Nonsense!"

"He hasn't got sand enough."

"He couldn't do it."

"It won't do at all."

These and other expressions of opinion were heard.

"Keep your clothes on," said the scion of the house of Bounce. "I say it was the dude

"When will it be?"

"When this thing has quieted down a little."

"All right, my boy," said they all.

Johnny was pretty sure that the dude was the fellow they had been looking for.

He did not know it for sure, however.

It was Harris himself who furnished him with the clinchers.

He met the dude on the lawn a day or so after the racket on Peter.

"Hallo, dude!" said Johnny. "Out in the sun so as to give your brain a chance?"

"You think yaw 'awfully clevah, don't you?" asked the dude.

"Yes, but I can't help it. My family was always smart."

This was only to lead the dude to confess.

"What rackets did you ever play on me?" he asked.

"Why, the one on old Petah Pilgwin, don't yah know, when the books fell on his ewanium."

"Oh, yes, to be sure. That was a dandy," and Johnny laughed immoderately.

The dude was very much elated.

"Yas, wasn't it, be Jove? I flaitah meself that was exceedingly clevah."

"Oh, you bet it was," and Johnny laughed some more.

"Yas, and that wasn't the only one, don't yah know," said the flattered calf.

"No?"

"No, sah."

Of course he would.

Johnny heard Harris bragging about getting leave to be out at night when the others had to stay in.

That gave him an idea.

"This is the night for our snap on the dude," he observed.

Then he made his plans for the surprise party. He told all his chums about it, and they fell into line with great unanimity.

They were just aching to pay off that dude.

Johnny's plan was voted to be an A 1, clipper built, dandy old snap.

The whole crowd was ready to carry it out to a successful issue.



"Ah theah, chappie!" "Don't stay out late, Fwddy." They all had something to say. They threw kisses at him. They called him pet names. They asked him if his mama knew he was out. In short, they would have made him feel like a fool if he hadn't felt that way already.

"Yaw no smawtah than lots of othah fellahs!"

"Oh, well, I like company, you know."

"You think you can play rackets on fellahs, don't you?"

"Why, yes, I think I have certain knack that way."

"Yaw not the only fellah that can play rackets, don't yah know."

"Yes, I must have somebody to help me now and then, you know."

"I suppose you think you owginate all yaw own wackets, don't yah?"

"Certainly."

"Well, you cawn't. I could give you snaps meself."

"Really?"

"Yas, be jove."

"You astonish me."

"Fact is, I've played wackets meself."

"You can't mean it."

"Yas, and I've played 'em on you and your fiends, smawt as you think you aw."

"The deuce you have!"

"Yas, I have."

"I thought so," mused Johnny.

He looked incredulous, however.

"You amaze me!"

"Why, me deah fellah, it was I who tied Petah in bed and frightened him so."

"Ho-ho-ho! that was another good one," roared Johnny. "Why, my boy, you're a genius."

"Yas, that was very clevah."

"Bet your life!"

"And then I put the figgah on Petah's bed, and wattle him wawse than evah," chuckled the dude.

"Upon my word, you're a top-sawyer at gag making," said Johnny. "I shall have to take lessons of you."

"Yas, I think I could give you several points," returned that conceited dude.

"All right, my boy," thought Johnny, "but I'll work some more on you before I begin to take lessons."

A day or so after this Harris asked permission to go and call on a young lady in town.

He had met her at church and was very much mated.

She knew a girl from his own place, and so they had mutual interests.

The other girl happened to come up on a visit just at this time.

Her friend asked Harris to call upon them.

Well, the dude had permission to go and see his girl.

He meant to just paralyze her, and no error. The boys would open their eyes, too, when they saw him.

Full dress was the thing to collar the biscuit.

Harris was provided with swell togs of the latest design.

His shirt front was embroidered, he had a shawl collar on his swallow-tail, and he took no broad-cloth in his.

He had all the newest wrinkles, you may be sure.

It took him an hour to dress, and half an hour to survey himself afterward.

He wore a dizzy dress suit, a wilderness of shirt bosom, a white sack overcoat, below which hung the tails of his black coat, he carried a big cane with a gold head, and looked altogether too sweet for this cruel world.

When he came down-stairs, the boys were waiting for him.

He put on his dicer, and sailed down the hall in all his dignity.

He would not notice the horrid fellahs.

The horrid fellahs gave them a good deal of notice, however.

He had to pass through a double row of them in getting to the door.

The hall chandelier threw its full light upon him and revealed him in all his loveliness.

"Ah theah, chappie!"

"Don't stay out late, Fweddy."

"Give me a cigawette, old one."

They all had something to say.

They threw kisses at him.

They called him pet names.

They asked him if his mamma knew he was out.

In short, they would have made him feel like a fool if he hadn't felt that way already.

He had to run the gauntlet of the whole gang of jokers before he reached the door.

His cheeks were on fire.

He longed for an earthquake.

Didn't he want to fight them all?

Well, I guess.

He would not have anything to say to them, however.

No, he would let them see that he utterly ignored them.

It was pretty tough, to be sure, but he got through it without disturbing a single hair of his seraphic bang.

"Ta-ta, baby," said Johnny, as the dude opened the door.

"Sweet-sweet!" said all the boys, imitating the sound of osculation with their lips.

The dude went out, and the door closed with a bang.

"Now for the grand gag," said Johnny.

Something as fine as silk and of extra width was coming.

CHAPTER XII.

THE only dude at Blodgett's was going calling. Johnny Brown & Co. bad got wind of it.

They intended to make his call a pleasant one.

Johnny and his chums had some old scores to settle with that dude.

They met him in the hall as he was going out, and gave him a good send-off.

Then, when he was outside, Johnny remarked:

"Now for our own little racket, boys."

They gave the dude a good start, knowing that they could easily catch up to him by means of a short cut which they knew.

Along the road went young Harris, feeling very much in love with himself and wondering if there really was just such another fellow in the world.

He was just like Narcissus in the old fable, thoroughly gone on his own shape.

Well, he had reached town and was on the last lap, a shady street with only a few houses on it.

Suddenly half a dozen dark forms sprang out from the roadside.

They seized him as a steel trap grabs its victim.

They hustled off his light coat and swallow-tail in a trice.

Then they sat him down in the road and deprived him of his doeskins.

All the time they swore most solemnly that if he opened his head they would garrote him.

They were a terrible lot of desperadoes.

Their faces were blackened with charcoal, and they were all arrayed like tramps.

They used the most terrible oaths too, and one's blood fairly congealed at such remarks as:

"What in the name of Oscar Wilde is this?"

"Crimp my bangs, but this is awful!"

"Great hairpins, ain't he a la-la!"

"Bust my corset strings if he isn't!"

"Bet you my chewing gum it's alive!"

The poor butterfly shivered and shook like an old Jersey resident.

Those bold, bad villains reduced him to his silk underwear, his freshly kalsomined shirt bosom and his high collar.

Then they proceeded to dress him after a fashion of their own.

First they put on a pair of young Pepper's boggans.

They were as big as boots and were plastered with mud.

Just think of it!

After this, or rather before, they put a pair of Pepper's overalls on him.

The brogues would never have gone through the overalls, and so the latter went on first.

They reached to the dude's knees and no more.

Pepper's legs were shorter than the slim's.

Then, too, he wore high-water trousers.

It's vulgar to say pants, don't you know.

The next thing that went on was a blue checked jumper.

The tide was dead low in the sleeves thereof, and they reached only to the dude's elbows.

The glittering shirt front, the enameled stud, the high collar and strap scarf, the flaring cuffs and the link buttons, these were all left as they were, and even the monocle was not disturbed, nor the swell brim hat.

"March!" growled one of the black band desperadoes.

"Say a word and we'll cut your bangs off!"

"Utter a sound and we'll take away your eyeglass."

"Make the least noise and we'll take away your cigarettes."

"Now march!"

These terrible threats had their due effect.

The poor slim was paralyzed.

He shook till he could hardly stand.

The abductors marched him along at a quick pace.

If they had not held his arms he would have fallen.

He was too scared to try and identify any of them.

If he had not been he could not have done it.

Their rough clothes and blackened faces put them beyond recognition.

He was so scared, too, that he never dreamed of their being his schoolmates.

He supposed them to be tramps, white caps or hoodoos of some kind.

They did not give him a chance to think otherwise.

They just raced him along the road till they reached his girl's house.

Then they pretended to release him.

That is, they let go of his arms.

"Now let's make him smoke a pipe," growled Johnny Brown.

"And chew tobacco," said Billy Bounce.

They were the ringleaders of the band of desperadoes.

When the dude heard these words he nearly fainted.

Surely his captors would not do such terrible things.

He made one grand break and dashed towards the house.

Up the steps he went like a billy goat climbing the Alps.

The way he rang that bell would have astonished a nervous person.

It was a wonder it was not pulled out by the roots.

How it did jingle all over the house.

You would have thought it had been struck by lightning.

"Seize the slim," said Johnny, in an awful voice, "and make him drink gin."

What an awful fate.

Poor Harris nearly hauled out the bell wire.

The girls were expecting him, but they did not think he was going to ring like that.

They both jumped up and let out top story screams.

Then they and the old man and the butler and the housemaid all went to the door.

The moment the portal flew open in dashed the dude.

The hall was square, with a big fireplace and big settees at one side, a winding staircase in front, curtained recesses on the other side and armor and antlers on the walls.

It was quite a dizzy place in fact.

The dizziest thing in it just then was that dude.

"Ah, how do, glad to see yah," he gurgled.

"I've had a howld iroight, don't yah know."

Then those girls giggled.

Could you blame them?

There stood that dude dressed as no dude ever dressed before.

His combination of starched shirt, high collar, eye glass, checked jumper, high water pants and big shoes was something unique.

No wonder the girls laughed.

The old man acted very differently, however.

"How dare you appear in my house in such a rig?" he demanded, angrily.

Poor Harris began to blubber.

"A gweat gang of howid wobbahs caught me and took away my twousahs," he cried, "and dwessed me up in these wags and thweatened all sawts of terwible things."

"Robbers!" cried the old man.

"Yas, weal despewate wobbahs, with black faces and pistols and knives, and I had an awful wace of it to get away fwom them."

He was dreadfully frightened, there was no doubt, and his imagination helped to fill in the missing details.

Really, when he had finished his story, you wondered how he had escaped with his life.

The boys, who had supplied him with articles taken from the wardrobe of Pepper, the groom at Blodgett's, now returned to the school, chuckling over the success of their little joke.

The unfortunate dude was too much scared, however, to think of returning that night.

The old man was not a little alarmed also, for he feared that the town was beset by tramps, and that they might all be murdered in their beds before morning light.

The dude's terror was not assumed by any means.

He was scared out of what little sense he had.

It would have been cruelty to animals to send him out again that night.

The old man gave him a coat, waist-coat and trousers to make him presentable, likewise a pair of slippers.

Then he went away, very discreetly, leaving the young ladies to entertain their guest.

He entertained them more than they did him.

They tried to be agreeable, but every now and then the memory of his comical appearance as he burst in upon them would cause them to giggle, and that broke him all up.

Girls will be girls, and you can't stop them giggling any more than you can stop them chewing gum, slate pencils or pickles.

Cut a girl's head off, and you stop her giggling, but she is not of any use afterwards.

Consequently, these girls giggled, and the more they giggled the more they wanted to giggle.

It is unnecessary to say that the dude was greatly embarrassed therat.

He tried to be entertaining, but those girls would persist in laughing at the most inopportune moments.

It was in them, and it just had to come out, and that was all you could say.

Every time they thought of how he had come in upon them, they had to snicker.

Sometimes one would set the other off, but now and then they would both burst out together.

It began to grow very monotonous for the poor dude.

Finally the old man came to the rescue.

He heard the girls laughing and knew the cause of it.

In fact, he had indulged in considerable hilarity himself, in the privacy of the library.

He was still somewhat scared, but, all the same, he could not help laughing now and then when he thought of the dude's comical full dress suit.

At last, however, he began to feel certain qualms of conscience.

This was when the girls got to giggling so much that there was fear of hysterics.

He went to the sitting-room and said:

"You had better stay here to-night, Mr. Harris, as I can't think of allowing you to expose your life a second time, and I have therefore ordered a room to be prepared for your accommodation."

"Thanks, awfully," said the dude, brightening, "and if you'll excuse me, I think I will wetah at once, if me woom is weady, don't jah know. Me nawvves have had a fewable shock and I can scarcely contain meself, upon me wawd I cawn't."

It was early, and he was not a bit sleepy, but he would sooner go to bed at once than sit up and have those girls laugh at him.

He was not quite a fool, and he did not feel at all flattered by it.

He, therefore, made his escape as gracefully as he could, and thanked the old man in his secret soul for having given him the opportunity.

The old gent sent him up a box of cigars, a bottle of wine, and the latest magazines, and our dude quite enjoyed himself.

The boys waited for him to show up until long past midnight, but he did not.

That's where they were sold, but then they had lots of fun for all that and were quite well satisfied with things as they stood.

They left the dude's duds in his room, inventing a neat little story to go with them, so that Harris might not suspect the real authors of the snap.

He never did, and when he returned the next day he had a terrible tale to tell of how he had been waylaid, robbed and nearly murdered.

Blodgett was satisfied, for he heard the confirmation of the dude's story from the old man in town.

The boys were satisfied, for they had taken their revenge in just the way that suited them most.

The only one who was not at all satisfied was Pepper.

Pepper was quite hot, in fact. Somebody had stolen his garments and shoes.

"Who's got yer clothes, ye red-headed landlubber?"

"Ye have, begob, and I want them."

"Hain't touched 'em, yer homely-looking swab."

"I say yez have. Ye t'reaten to take 'em wanst and now ye've done it."

"Awast, yer red-headed pirate. What would I want with yer clothes? They wouldn't fit me."

"Yez have dressed up a scarecrow wid 'em."

"Sheer off, yer sawed-off figgerhead. I don't know nuthin' about 'em, scuttle yer old hulk."

"Go on now an' don't be foolin' wid me. Phwaw have yez done wid them."

"Go ask them young buccaneers of boys. I ain't had yer dirty old clothes."

Then he sat down on him, and held him there, while he proceeded to take off Peter's leg.

Having done this, he advanced to the furnace, and said:

"Neow, thin, tell me phwere me clothes are, or I'll burrn yer peg in the furrnace."

"Hain't had 'em, and don't know where they are," growled Peter.

"Will yez take yer oat' an it?"

"Yes."

"Thin ax me pardin fur callin' me eout av me name."

"I'll be swamped if I do."

"Thin yer shtump goes in the foire."

"Hold on; I take it back."

Harris did not care to be laughed at again. Once was quite sufficient to suit even his morbid appetite for notoriety.

Having brought one good snap to a successful issue the boys were now quite ready to undertake another.

Consequently, they looked around for a fresh victim.

They concluded to let up on Peter for a time.

The old crank had not made himself especially obnoxious to them just then.

That's why they gave him a rest that trip.

They were several laps ahead of him, anyhow, and could afford to let him catch up.

They did not care to tackle the dude either.



His combination of starched shirt, high collar, eye glass, checked jumper, high water pants and big shoes was something unique. No wonder the girls laughed. The old man acted very differently, however.

"Begob, they're as clean as anny that yez have, ye black muzzled ould robber."

"Don't yer go runnin' across my bow, yer young fishin' smack, or yer'll get upset," returned Peter, in true nautical phraseology.

"Go on, ye ould tub. Phwere are me pants and jumper. Yis, an' me shoes too, begob."

"Hain't had 'em," retorted Peter, sulkily.

"Ye're a liar, ye have!"

Pepper was still hot and had no intentions of being ground down by any old sea dog with one leg like Peter Pilgrim.

Peter was not going to stand there and be called a liar in his own cellar by any vermillion haired runt like Pepper, if he knew it.

He was an arrant coward, but he thought that he might bluff the gardener.

That's where he missed it.

"Get out o' here, yer 'squint-eyed Mick," he blustered, "or I'll fire yer out mighty quick."

"Ye will not."

"We'll see."

Then Peter went at Pepper with a long poker he had.

Pepper was no good at poker, but he was a dandy at shuffling.

He rushed at Peter, and shuffled that old salt on his back in three shakes.

"Neow say that ye're an old woman, and a chump."

"I won't do it!" snarled Peter.

Pepper threw open the furnace door.

"Yes—yes, I am!" howled Peter.

"Yez are phwot?"

"An old woman."

"Yis, and a chump. Say that."

"I'm a chump," groaned Peter.

"That's phwot I thought," chuckled Pepper.

Then he threw the stump in a far corner, and went away.

Peter had to hobble after his leg, and he did not feel any better disposed toward Pepper in consequence.

The gardener had to get some new duds, and he continued to hold a grudge against the janitor as before.

Well, Harris did not undertake to play off any more jokes on Peter or the boys for some time, nor did he suspect that Johnny and his chums had worked such a beauty on him.

He still believed that he had been robbed by tramps.

The boys told him that they had found his clothes in the road, and he believed them.

There were no more visits made to those girls in town either.

They must rig up a gag on somebody, however. They decided upon Simpson, otherwise known as Whiskers.

This dandy was in the habit, nowadays, of taking a walk every morning before breakfast, to get up an appetite.

The boys had caught on to this habit of his and concluded to take advantage of it.

It was decidedly frosty these days and ice had already formed on the small creeks and ponds in the neighborhood.

Simpson always took the same route in going on his little walk before hash.

Out the big gate, down the road, over the stile, through the woods, across the little bridge and in at the side gate.

That was the way he always went, as the boys had discovered.

The little bridge was simply a plank laid across a ditch eight or ten feet wide and about six feet deep.

Simpson called it a brook, but it wasn't anything of the kind.

It was a plain every day, vulgar ditch, full of muddy water, and no amount of poetic license could make it anything else.

Well, the boys thought it would be a fine thing to get off a joke on Whiskers.

He was in the habit of using very robust and forcible language when aroused, and they used to stir him up sometimes, just to see what he would say.

On this particular occasion they expected to hear something first class in the way of expletive.

The morning chosen for the snap was cold, sharp and raw, a light snow having fallen, while the surface of Simpson's brook was covered with a thin coating of ice.

As soon as Whiskers was out of sight, the boys hurried to the ditch and sawed the plank nearly in half.

It would hold one of the boys, even when sawed.

Let Simpson look out however, when he put his manly form upon it.

Having baited the trap, the boys hid in the bushes to wait for the victim.

Promptly to the minute he came through the wood at a swinging pace, whistling the latest thing in comic songs.

His cheeks were rosy, his sideboards fluttered in the wind, his breath turned to vapor as it struck the air and he felt just altogether too fresh and breezy for anything.

His walk had done him good and he came on with a quick elastic tread, like a soldier just starting on a day's march.

The wind still blew through his slingers as he stepped upon the plank with a firm tread.

Well, it was just what might have been expected.

Crack!

When Whiskers reached the middle of the plank it doubled up like a jack-knife.

Down he went into the icy water up to his neck.

The boys were prepared to hear something very choice in the way of objuration.

They just expected to hear the sky crack with the phosphoric remarks of that astonished Simpson.

What do you suppose he did say, after all?

"Well, I declare!"

CHAPTER XIII.

It was too bad of Whiskers.

The boys were listening, expecting to say something which would send the mercury up to one hundred degrees in the shade.

There he was, up to his collar button in ice water and all he said was:

"Well, I declare!"

Was it too disappointing?

The boys never felt as flat in their lives.

They were just mad enough to go away and leave Simpson to get out the best way he could.

That's just what he did do, and then he ran to the house as fast as his shanks would carry him.

He thought it was funny that the plank had to go and break, but he never suspected that the boys had been the cause of it.

He did not go out walking before breakfast after that, and for three or four days he had a high old cold in his head and the English branches suffered in consequence.

The fellows were fortunate in not being found out, but then that did not often happen.

Matters went on about as usual until Dodger, the housekeeper, got a sudden crank in her old head and began to slight the boys' grub.

She had lately taken to reading society novels and found more interest in comely ladies, handsome men and marriage in high life than she did in roasts and boils, stews and fries.

Johnny twigged her reading a novel called "Goeth up like a rocket," when she ought to have been looking after dinner, and he thought it was time to do something.

She would read day and night, in the kitchen, in her own room, or in the hall, it mattered not where.

She carried novels in the pockets of her dress, she kept them in the pantry drawers, they were found on the hat stand, in the school-room, and occasionally on the lawn under the trees, wherever Mrs. Dodger went, in fact.

Her head was full of elopements, romantic weddings, stern parents, ruined castles, palatial mansions, orders of nobility, faithful servitors and such rubbish, and she actually believed that some nice young man with a blonde mustache and a title a yard long would come in one of those days and carry her off in spite of herself.

She told Pepper that the days of romance had gone by, to which he replied that it generally ripened in September, and that yes, it was rather late for it now.

Then she tried to explain, but Pepper was too thick and could not understand her jest.

She informed Peter that she was thinking of getting married, and the old crank, thinking that she was going to propose to him and marry him off hand, willy nilly, stumped away and did not go near her for three days.

Johnny, Billy and the rest thought it was about time to put a stop this novel-reading nonsense.

There was no use in saying anything to Blodgett about it.

He would forget it the next moment, or, if he did not, he would use such mild language to the housekeeper that she would pay no attention to the complaint.

Neither was it any good to speak to Simpson.

He would simply say that the boys lived too high anyhow, and that they ought to diet more, and that would be an end of it.

No, they must go for Dodger herself if they wished to remedy the evil.

That was exactly what Johnny Brown meant to do.

He accordingly took his bearings, made his calculations, posted his pals, and got to work.

Mrs. Dodger was very fond of sitting in the kitchen of a night, and reading the latest novel.

In this room was a big, old-fashioned grandmother's clock, that had seen its best days.

In fact, it was only the case of a clock, and in that case, you know, you can get no tick.

The face and works had been taken out, and there was only a big, round hole where the face had been.

It was a regular old peeler of a clock, and stood seven feet from the floor, quite up to the ceiling, in short.

Johnny had tumbled to this clock, and had invented a novel use for it.

When it came time for the boys to go to bed, Master Johnny blackened his face with burned cork till he looked like a full blown coon.

He left a wide swath of white skin all around his mouth and rings about his eyes, which gave him a most singular appearance.

Nobody would have thought of giving him the premium at a congress of beauties.

He seemed all mouth and eyes and was homely enough to kill rats.

Well, he sneaked down to the kitchen door and waited his chance to get in.

He knew that Blodgett generally sent for Dodger previous to going up to his own apartments.

If Baldy had forgotten to do so Billy Bounce was ready to whistle down the tube and call the Dodger up.

Pretty soon the summons came for Dodger to bring up a pitcher of hot water to the old man's study.

The housekeeper was deeply engrossed in the adventures of Lady Mary Ann in the thrilling novel of "Liver and Bacon and That's All," by Mr. Fargone, at that time, and she did not like being interrupted.

She put down her book, got the hot water, and trudged off up-stairs, Johnny crouching down in a dark corner as she came out.

The moment she was on the stairs Johnny slipped into the kitchen and got into the clock case.

He was not quite tall enough, but he had foreseen that difficulty.

There was a three-legged stool, on which the Dodger generally rested her feet, standing in one corner, having been pre-empted by the cat.

Johnny ousted Mrs. Puss, put the stool inside the case and closed the door.

The cat did not like being disturbed, but as there was no help for it, she went off and cuddled herself upon the hearth in front of the fire.

Presently Mrs. Dodger returned and resumed her seat at the table, with a big lamp alongside, took up her book and prepared to enjoy herself.

The story was intensely interesting, and Dodger began to read aloud, so as to make it all the more exciting.

"The lady Mary Ann raised her hand, on which glistened several costly gems, drew her form, clad in richest velvet, to its full height, glanced across a rare, old, inlaid table to the quaint, old, solid mahogany arm-chair, where the earl sat, toying with the decorations upon his breast, and said:

"No, my lord, I cannot be yours," and in the silence that followed the snoring of her prize poodle, worth a thousand pounds, could be distinctly heard.

"Think again, Lady Mary Ann," said the earl, as he passed his patent-leather boot over the rug of Russia sables and took a pinch of fine Macca-boy from a golden snuff-box set with diamonds.

"Never!" said the lady, the jewels sparkling in her point lace flch, "not if you were worth ten times what you are," and Lady Mary Ann's eyes glittered like twenty-karat diamonds as she felt for the famous old Etruscan dagger which she kept concealed behind her six-ply velvet bodice.

This was one of the upholstery style of novels, and Mrs. Dodger was greatly absorbed.

Before she could ascertain what next occurred, whether the lady killed herself or the earl, or whether his billions proved too great a temptation, there came an interruption.

It proceeded from the clock.

"Cuckoo! I see you." Cuckoo! Peek-a-boo! Cuckoo! How d'y do?"

"Mercy sakes! What's that?" cried the Dodger, starting up.

A black face with big red lips and great eyes appeared and disappeared with mechanical regularity in the place where the clock face had been.

"Cuckoo! Peek-a-boo!" said a piping voice, and then the face bobbed out of sight.

"Cuckoo! I see you!" and the face came in sight again.

Mrs. Dodger threw the book away, hit the cat on the head, sent the chair flying, nearly upset the lamp, and then swooned away on the floor.

"Cuckoo!" chimed the clock.

Up-jumped the cat with her tail as big as a club, and began to spit and arch her back in a very beligerent fashion.

While poor Mrs. Dodger lay unconscious on the floor, Johnny came out of his hiding-place.

Restoring the stool to its original corner, he closed the clock case door and skipped out, leaving everything as it was before.

Then he listened outside and peeked through the keyhole to see what happened next.

The housekeeper presently recovered, sat up and looked around.

The clock looked the same as usual, the cat was asleep on the stool, the lamp was in its place, the chair was all right and the book lay on the table.

"Lor' me, I must ha' had a vision," muttered Dodger.

Then she arose and went very cautiously to the clock.

She opened the door and then jumped back, evidently imagining that something was going to spring out upon her.

The case was empty.

"Lor' me!" she exclaimed with a sigh, "it's them novels. I get that nervous n-readin' of 'em that I fancies all sorts of things. I won't read another one, though I did really want to find out what became of the beautiful lady."

Dodger was beginning to get over her scare.

"I would just like to know if that awful wicked dook or earl, or whatever he was, got the girl, after all?" she mused.

Curiosity was fast getting the better of terror.

"I'll just see how it comes out anyhow," she remarked.

Then she picked up the book and began to hunt for her place.

"Cuckoo! peek-a-boo!" came in piping tones through the keyhole.

That was enough for Dodger.

She dropped that book as though it had been on fire.

"Lor' me!" she screamed, as she plumped down in the chair.

There was no more touching the novel that night.

She would not have picked it up if it had been stuffed with bank-notes.

She left it lying on the floor, grabbed the lamp, and scooted up to her room just as suddenly as her limbs would allow.

Johnny would have been caught if he had not been one of the sudden sort.

He was too rapid to be taken unawares, and he dusted the moment that he heard Dodger's feet coming his way.

"Cuckoo! I see you!" he chirped back after him, as he flew up the stairs, and Dodger nearly had a fit.

She reached her room at last, locked herself in and vowed that she would read no more novels at night.

She did not, and the boys had better grub after that.

Johnny retired to the dormitories, washed his face, and then told his chums all about the dandy racket he had played on the housekeeper.

They all voted it first-class, and they turned in and went to sleep, ready and willing to work off another good snap at the first opportunity.

This was not long in making its appearance.

Pepper was the fellow who gave it to them.

Of course he had no intention of doing so, but these things come around usually when you are not expecting them.

The little Irishman had a birthday just about this time, and he determined to celebrate it.

He couldn't keep it to himself, and the boys heard all about it.

It was Saturday, and he asked for a half holiday, so as to give the occasion due honor.

Well, he went to town, and got jolly drunk.

When he came back, in the early evening, he was too full for utterance.

The boys were ready for him, and escorted him to the barn.

Pepper wanted to go to sleep, but the boys wouldn't let him.

Johnny had prigged the dude's dress suit, and it was proposed to rig the gardener in it.

The boys set to work at it with much hilarity.

In the first place the trousers were too long, and had to be turned up half way to the knees.

The coat fitted him altogether too much likewise.

You must remember that Harris was quite tall, even for sixteen, and that Pepper was unusually short.

The cuffs had been turned back six inches and the tails brushed against Pepper's brogans.

The waistcoat reached half way to his knees, the top buttons thereof striking Pepper at the waist.

A high collar would have strangled Pepper, for he had no neck to mention.

He was let off without any, although he had a white tie and a fresh coat of whitewash on his shirt front.

When he was fixed up, with a high plug hat have been at work.

All hands were grinning at him, and he concluded that he must have said something funny.

He grinned himself, at that, and looked funnier still.

"Well?" said Blodgett.

"Did yez sind for me, sir?"

"No."

"Faix, I t'ought yez did."

"Where have you been, Pepper?"

"To town, sor. It's me borthday, ye may remember."

"Hence the dress suit," chuckled Simpson.

"Did you shrink after you were dressed, Pepper?"

Whiskers knew very well that the boys must

"Thank, ye, sor. I wasn't sure," and Pepper moved with an uncertain gait toward the door.

He looked as funny behind as he did in front and everybody laughed.

"I'm not sure now whether it's me or not," mused Pepper. "The boss says it is, but thin he do laugh so that maybe it's on'y joking he is. I'll ask some wan else."

Whiskers opened the door for the runt and assisted him into the hall, where he returned to his companions.

"Pepper seems to be pretty well pickled," he remarked.

"Yes," returned Blodgett, "but I hope he won't celebrate all of his birthdays in this fashion."



"Cuckoo! Peek-a-boo!" said a piping voice, and then the face bobbed out of sight. "Cuckoo! I see you!" and the face came in sight again. Mrs. Dodger threw the book away, hit the cat on the head, sent the chair flying, nearly upset the lamp, and then swooned away on the floor.

perched on top of his red head, the boys told him that Blodgett had sent for him.

Pepper was too hilariously happy to decline.

The boys led him as far as Blodgett's door and then knocked loudly for admission.

Baldhead, Whiskers and one or two others were having a quiet hand at whist.

"Come in," said the principal.

That sounded natural to Pepper, and he fumbled at the door knob until he finally succeeded in turning it.

Then the boys gave him a push and he bounced into the room with great eclat.

The appearance of the little runt in a misfit dress suit was too comical for even the stolid Blodgett.

As for Simpson, he laughed away down to the ends of his whiskers.

"Well, Pepper, what is it?" asked Blodgett, grinning.

"Pepper's pod is rather too big for him, I guess," chuckled Simpson.

"He'll fall out of them if he isn't careful," said somebody.

Pepper stood in the middle of the room looking ugly enough to make the sphynx laugh.

Pepper glanced down at himself, and nearly fell over in the operation.

"Faix, I don't think that it's me phwat's in it at all," he mused. "I must have shrunk up."

"He's full enough to swell 'em out, I should say," observed one of the tutors.

"Maybe he has stretched 'em that way," said Simpson.

"No, I don't want you, Pepper," said Blodgett. He had had his little laugh, and was now willing to dispense with the gardener's company.

"It's me borthday, sor," said Pepper.

"Yes—yes."

"And I've been to town, sor."

"Exactly."

"Jist as ye tould me I cud."

"Yes, that's all right."

"Ye're sure it's me, sor?"

"Yes, quite sure."

"Albeit somewhat disguised," put in Whiskers.

"Thin that's all right," muttered Pepper, turning towards the door. "I wasn't quite sure av it was me or some one else, but I know yez wouldn't lie, professor, and av yez say it's me phwat's in it, I'll take yer worrud for it, sor."

"Yes, yes, it's you, Pepper. Good-night."

Blodgett had his suspicions that the boys, finding Pepper in a pliable condition, had togged him up in this fashion and had sent him in.

That was correct enough as far as it went.

Old Baldy did not know who the jokers were, however, and he had no very certain way of finding out.

Pepper was in no condition to know, and the boys were not likely to tell upon themselves.

Peter might give him the desired information, but then the old man had rather soured on Peter of late.

He had come to the conclusion that Peter was a crockety old crank who did not always tell the truth, especially if he had a grudge against the boys.

At any rate, there was no great harm done, and Baldy concluded to let the matter drop then and there.

It wasn't quite over with, however.

There was still another scene to the little interlude.

As Pepper went clumping along the hall towards his own apartment he was met by Harris.

The dude was going up to his room to put on another tie.

The one he wore was not of a good color by gas-
ght, and he wished to change it.

That's how he came to meet Pepper.

"Aw, bah Jove, the little wunt has got on a
dwess suit," he drawled. "It's a weal shame that
theah cannot be something to distingwisch fellahs
like that from gentlemen, don't you know?"

Then he got a closer view of the little gardener.
He recognized his own togs in a moment.

That was too much.

It was bad enough, even, that Pepper had on a
dress suit at all.

It was worse that he had on borrowed plumage
and that the property of so distinguished a person
as young Harris.

The dude strode up with wrath in his eye,
whisked Pepper about, and said:

"How dare you weah my clothes, you howid
little Iwishman? Take them off this minute."

"Good avenin', sur," said Pepper. "Is this me
or some wan else? I wor waitin' to ax ye that."

"It's you, I suppose, you howid monkey. How
dare you put on my best dwess clothes?"

"The clothes!" muttered Pepper, holding on by
the stair railing. "It's the shoot yez mean, ain't
it?"

"Yas, I do mean, and I wish to inquiah why
you had the impudence to put them on, sah, with-
out my pawmission? Take them off, sah, at
once."

"Faix, I believe they'll fall off if yez give them
toime," chuckled Pepper. "Sure, I hardly know
which way I'm goin' neow, they're that big!"

Harris grabbed the coat by the collar and yank-
ed it off in a jiffy.

It upset Pepper, but the dude didn't care for
that.

He yanked off the vest and trousers in the same
summary fashion.

That left Pepper in the summery fashion of shirt
and underclothes.

The dude threw the things over his arm and
stalked angrily up-stairs.

Pepper proceeded more deliberately to his own
room on the ground floor.

On his way he met the housekeeper, Mrs
Dodger.

Pepper was beginning to feel funny.

"Peek-a-boo!" he chirped, as he caught sight of
the lady.

That magic word broke the Dodger all up.

Her mind was quite full of ghosts and goblins as
it was considering her recent experience.

She thought she had 'em ag ain for a certainty.

"Lor' me!" she screamed.

Then she fled.

The way she got out of that beat rapid traveling
all hollow.

She declared that she had seen a ghost, and she
roused up all the servants to go and rout it out.

By that time Pepper had reached his room, tumb-
bled into bed, boots and all, and was fast asleep.

The new phase of Pepper's ghost, so well known
to science, did not attract any great attention in
the learned world, however.

Nobody could find it, and Mrs. Dodger was de-
clared to be a female chump.

She came to the same conclusion herself, though
she did not tell any one so.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE dude blamed the boys in the matter of Pep-
per and his dress suit, the housekeeper declared
that they had frightened her with a ghost, Simp-
son felt sure that they had been up to some lark
or another, and Blodgett concluded that some-
body ought to be punished after all.

Having thus decided, he picked out half a dozen
of the worst cases in the school, had them prompt-
ly flogged, and went to bed happy.

The boys had been licked without Peter's in-
fluence, however, and that made old Stumpjack
mad.

He felt that he had been cheated out of a just
revenge.

He did not even know that the offenders were
going to be whacked until the whole business
was over.

That was altogether wrong, he felt.

He ought to have been consulted when the vic-
tims were selected.

He could tell who needed punishment every
time, in his own opinion.

He was mad enough to chew his own wooden
leg when he thought how he had been cheated.

However, there was no help for it now, for he
couldn't pick out a new batch of boys and tell
Blodgett that they were the ones to be licked.

The boys, meanwhile, were quite ready for an-
other gag, and were only waiting for a suitable
subject to play it on.

After due consideration they agreed that this
was Whiskers.

Before they could work it, however, they played
a little racket on themselves.

They did not intend to do it, of course, but
sometimes these things happen when you least
expect them.

Half a dozen of the boys including Johnny,
Billy and their particular cronies were out after
nuts one afternoon.

There was an old windmill on the hill just be-
fore they came to the woods.

It was one of your old-fashioned wind-mills
with arms reaching nearly to the ground and big
sails spread upon them.

Half way up from the ground to the top was a
sort of wooden balcony running around, with a
door leading to it from the mill.

The dusty miller used this platform when any-
thing went wrong with his sails.

Well, the great arms had their sailcloth ulsters
on them when the boys came along, but they were
not going.

The miller had stopped them by means of a ratchet
inside, so that he might look at the stones and
chuck in some more grist.

This was the only mill of the kind in the neigh-
borhood and the boys were greatly interested.

"Why don't he set the old thing to going?" asked
Johnny as he stood by one of the big arms and ex-
amined it.

"Let's go and see," suggested Billy.

Johnny turned to join the others.

The arms began to turn at the same moment.

The miller had removed the obstruction.

As the big arm arose it passed on a level with
Johnny's suspender buttons.

That young gentleman was too near that arm
for his own good.

A big spike projecting from the joints at the
bottom caught in the seat of his trousers as he
turned.

He was yanked off his feet in a jiffy, fat as he
was.

He realized that something had happened, and
he made a wild clutch at the air.

Instead of the air he grabbed the hair—the same
belonging to Billy Bounce.

The wind was blowing stiff, and up went the
great arms.

Johnny, suspended by the seat of his breeches,
grabbed Billy by the wool and held on.

Billy began to be lifted up, and he started yell-
ing.

He was lifted clean off his feet before help ar-
rived.

Johnny by this time was well up in the world.

Sam Berries rushed forward and seized Billy's
feet just before they got out of reach.

He lost his own as the arm yanked him over the
ground in its upward rise, but he hung on to
Billy's.

"Hi, hi, Joe—somebody!" he howled in great
alarm.

He was beginning to take a rise in the world
himself now.

He kicked and yelled, but did not dare to let go
of Billy.

It was a wonder Billy's hair was not yanked out
by the roots.

Up rushed Joe and grabbed Sam's coat-tails with
both hands.

Then he likewise began to sweep up the ground
with the bosom of his pants.

He howled for help, but held on all the same.

Tom Wilson rushed up as Joe's heels knocked
his hat off.

He grabbed them and began to do the sweep act
on his own account.

It was doubtful if the mill arm would hold much
more.

Something was sure to give way.

It might be Johnny's pants, or it might be the
spike.

At any rate somebody would get a bad tumble.

Things were getting serious.

First there was Johnny away up in the air hang-
ing by the seat of his bifurcations.

Then there was Billy suspended by his hair and
yelling like mad.

To him was clinging Sam Berries, Billy's feet
beating a tattoo on his stomach, and his own legs
waving frantically about.

His jacket was nearly yanked off his back by
Joe Cummings, who held on for all he was worth.

Then Tom Wilson was holding on Joe's heels,
and if they kept on, the whole gang would be in
the air in a second.

Jack Hiller grabbed Tom, and began to yell for
the miller.

The arm would have carried the whole lot of
them up, if Johnny's pants were sure to hold out.

Fortunately, the miller appeared at this moment.

He laughed ready to spit, but he realized the
danger all the same.

In he rushed, and stopped the wheels.

Then he rushed out on the gallery, and grabbed
Sam.

Those below Sam tumbled to the ground in a
heap.

You could not tell one from the other for a few
moments, they were so mixed up.

"Ow, you're kicking a hole in my bread basket!"
howled Sam.

"I won't have any hair left!" bawled Billy.

"Something's giving way!" yelled Johnny.

The miller hauled Sam in over the railing.

His man grabbed Billy at the same time.

Then something broke loose.

It was the spike.

Johnny's breeches had been made by a country
tailor, and were warranted to wear.

If they had been ready made goods his friends
would have had to brush for him just then.

The spike was yanked loose, and down came
Johnny.

Luck was in his favor that time as always.

He fell on top of his chums as they lay sprawled
out upon the ground.

My! but what a shaking up there was!

However, no one was hurt beyond a general
rattling.

They agreed not to go fooling around wind mills
in future, however.

Once was an abundant sufficiency.

They all breathed more freely when the circus
was over.

The miller, however, had to have his little laugh
out.

He roared till you could hear him down at the
village.

The infection spread to his man, who was an old
sober-sides as a usual thing.

The way they both laughed would have done a
circus clown good.

"Ho, ho, ho! he, he, he! haw, haw! but that's
the best yet."

"How they would have looked, all spinnin'
through the air like teetotalers!"

"Tetotums you mean, Jake. Ho, ho, hi, hi,
haw!"

"Mighty funny, wasn't it?" muttered Johnny;

"but if you hadn't full confidence in your breeches
or your suspender buttons, I guess you wouldn't
want to take such a trip."

"My hair will grow Pompadour style for a
week," observed Billy.

"Using a fellow's stomach for a drum ain't what
you think it is," declared Sam, "and if you don't
believe it, let some fellers try it on you once."

But the miller continued to laugh and no
amount of satire or irony could induce him to
stop.

His man laughed too, and both together made a
team.

The miller roared and his man giggled, so you
can imagine the combination.

"Ah, come on," said Johnny to his chums.

"Those gillies never saw anything funny before
and they've got to make up for lost time."

The boys themselves had to laugh when they
thought the thing over, but they weren't prepared
to snicker before the two millers.

"If we'd tried to get up a snap on somebody
else we couldn't have done better than that,"
chuckled Johnny, when they reached the woods.

"Imagine old Peter going up like that. It beat
his kite racket all to nothing."

"Fancy Simpson airing his whiskers from the
end of a mill arm, clear up in the sky."

"Well, that was one on us and it all happened
as naturally as breaking your neck."

"I'd give a dollar to see the same snap played
on some other fellow."

"Those snaps don't come along every day in the
week."

"No, sir, that didn't have any old worn out
trade mark on it, yer bet."

"It was a bakery embezzler, you'd better be-
lieve."

Well, the boys did not give themselves away, of
course, but somebody else did.

The two millers told the story, and it worked
around till at last Simpson got hold of it.

There was a hollow place in the garden also where the water had settled and frozen.

It was two or three hundred feet long and about twenty wide.

It made a dandy slide for the boys.

Harris was too tony to indulge in any such sport, but the others enjoyed it.

Every noon they were out there sliding for dear life.

That made Peter mad.

He hated to see any one enjoying himself.

He especially hated to see those boys having a good time.

He determined to stop it.

There were some more mad boys in that institute then.

That wasn't all Peter did.

Some of the boys hung their skates in the hall, under their hats, so as to have them handy.

Peter said it wasn't the place for them, and collared the lot.

That did not satisfy him.

He let the furnace fire go out on a cold night.

The boys nearly froze.

The next day he had the house full of smoke all

the morning.

And yet he was not happy.

He swiped a box that was sent to Johnny for the

At night they were ready to carry them out.

It was a lovely moonlight night, and the snow lay like a clean sheet over the flower beds.

It was just the sort of night for a lovers' meeting by the sitting-room stove.

After the lights were out, the young conspirators stole down and out.

They were armed with various weapons, offensive, defensive, and protective.

There were barrel staves.

And brooms.

Likewise base ball bats.

Also racquets.

Ditto snow-shoes.



There was the doorway, as black as the pit, and there were the boys in the bright moonlight. They all put themselves on guard. Every boy had his weapon ready to strike.

What must he do but go and drop several loads of fertilizer on the boys' slide.

That knocked it silly as far as sliding on it was concerned.

You might as well try to slide on a paper of tacks.

The boys made a fuss, but that didn't do any good.

Peter said the garden needed fertilizing, and he couldn't bother about the boys.

That wasn't all he did either.

The boys had a coasting hill just back of the school-house.

They were just beginning to have fun with it when Peter saw it.

He couldn't fertilize that very well.

Instead of that he ordered a lot of brush brought to cover up the strawberry beds.

Every bit of it was dragged down that hill.

That wasn't enough, though.

He dumped a barrel of ashes on it.

By this time the boys were mad.

Peter had not finished his kind offices, however.

Some of the younger boys built a snow fort in front of the house.

Peter smashed it the very first day it was built, before the boys could have any fun in it.

approaching holidays, and said it had forbidden articles in it.

He did the same to Billy Bounce.

A box came for Harris, and he collared that likewise.

Even the dude was down on him then.

When Johnny and Billy found out about this latest bit of spite, they were boiling mad.

They called a council of war on the spot.

Even the dude was let into it.

So were the little kids.

Something must be done to make that old salt less fresh.

"Tell Blodgett," said one.

"No good," said Johnny. "We will interview

Mr. Peter himself."

Then he and Billy fixed it up.

Some of the boys thought it was too risky.

They backed out.

There were plenty who staid in, however.

Old Stump was going to get a dose this time.

He would let them alone after that.

They would teach him to mind his own business in future.

There were a dozen of them that meant business.

Johnny, Billy, Harris, Sam and Joe were all in it.

They made their plans during the day.

And Indian clubs.

McCreaver hammock-stretchers.

Every boy had something.

They went out at the side door, leaving it wide open.

Peter's room opened on the passage leading from that little side door.

The boys gathered outside, ready for business.

Then they raised their voices.

How they did yell!

Buffalo Bill's Indians were fools to them.

They howled worse than forty cats.

Talk about making night hideous!

They discounted that, twice over.

They yelled in a dozen different keys.

They pounded on the stoop with clubs.

They kicked against the side of the house with their big boots.

They banged away on tin pans and broken bottles.

It was a second edition of Pandemonium with revisions.

All this was for good old Peter's sake.

They were giving him a nice little serenade.

He would be sure to hear it of course.

Then he would come out and acknowledge the courtesy.

He would doubtless make them a pretty little speech.

He would take down their names for publication in the village paper.

It would be the event of the season.

He would not be likely to forget it in a month.

You're right he wouldn't, when the boys got through with him.

He would probably have cause to remember them for many a day.

Well, the boys made noise enough to arouse a mummy.

Peter could not fail to hear all that hullabaloo.

In fact, the boys presently heard a footstep in the hall.

It was late and they had made a terrible racket to attract the old duffer's attention.

Then when he appeared, let him look out.

Every boy had something with which to club him.

They had got tired of his mean, sneaking ways and meant to serve him out.

Can you blame them?

Well, not much!

They heard a footstep and gathered on either side of the door to receive him in proper style.

All was perfectly quiet and decorous now.

Wait a bit, however.

Out came somebody.

Then somebody caught it in the neck.

The walloping the boys had given him knocked the ginger clean out.

He thought he had been to the mill and been ground.

People who engage in mills generally do feel that way.

He got up, not without considerable trouble, and looked around him.

There wasn't a person in sight.

"It's very funny," he observed. "I thought I heard a noise and something certainly struck me."

Something certainly had.

He would go heavy on that.

"But there isn't any one around."

He was quite right there.



He was all broken up. The walloping the boys had given him knocked the ginger clean out. He thought he had been to the mill and been ground.

This was during a lull in the Wagner overture. They could not have heard an elephant fall down while the symphony was going on.

Yes, they distinctly heard a footstep in the hall.

Peter had been aroused, and was coming to talk to them.

They could hear his gentle stump as he came on.

At a signal they all posted themselves in position.

Half were on one side of the open door, half on the other side.

There were none in sight from the hall.

They were all too cute for that.

There was the doorway, as black as the pit, and there were the boys in the bright moonlight.

They all put themselves on guard.

Every boy had his weapon ready to strike.

Now you could have heard a mouse breathe.

It was the calm before the blizzard.

Stump, stump, came the footsteps.

In another minute the victim would be on hand.

Wasn't he going to catch it?

Likewise in the shins.

Also in the back.

Wherever a blow could be planted, in fact.

Down went somebody like a ton of coal through a skylight.

Somebody got a terrible basting.

All hands got a good whack at him, and some got two.

Then somebody spoke.

"Boys, Peter, Simpson, Pepper, help! I shall be murdered!"

BLODGETT!

Oh, what a surprise!

Fortunate Peter, unfortunate Baldy!

At the first sound of his voice the boys desisted.

They chuckle their weapons away in a jiffy.

Then they suddenly lighted out as fast as they knew how.

They didn't care to stay there and answer foolish questions.

The professor would want to know what they were doing down at the door and all about it.

Like the boy in the song, "they didn't like to tell."

Consequently they got right out of that like men.

They skipped around to the front door, got in, and hustled up to bed.

As for the professor, he was all broken up.

Simpson and the other teachers now came out and wanted to know what was the matter.

Blodgett couldn't tell them except that he had heard a terrible racket at the door, had gone out and had been given a terrible beating.

None of the boys showed up, of course.

They knew better.

They were in bed, besides, and night shirts are not full dress.

They wondered, however, why Peter had not come out.

On that night Peter's lucky star was on the very top notch of its zenith.

He wasn't within five miles of the institute.

In fact, he had gone away immediately after supper to a dance in the next town.

Blodgett had shut up the house in Peter's absence.

That's how he got the little surprise intended for Pegtoes.

This time the boys got left.

They had their fun, all the same.

Peter wouldn't be let off, either.

His little picnic would come, all in good time.

Blodgett's rheumatism was decidedly worse the next day.

He had to sit on a pillow, in fact.

CHAPTER XV.

THE boys were all waiting outside the school house for Peter.

He wanted to know who had given him that dressing down the worst way.

The boys did not enlighten old Baldness on that point.

When questioned, they expressed the utmost astonishment that such a thing had happened.

They would not forget Peter Pilgrim, however.

You can lay anything on that.

However, there was that overdue snap on Whiskers to be put through.

It was quite ripe and ready to be picked by this time.

Simpson had given up walking before breakfast.

There was too much snow on the ground for that.

Some people enjoy wading through two feet of snow with the mercury away down in the bulb and some do not.

Simpson was one of the kind who do not.

He had his little exercise all the same, though.

He took it with a pony and cutter.

Every morning he went out for a drive before hash time.

When he came back he had roses in his cheeks, a cold in his head and the appetite of a horse.

That's the healthfulness of open air exercise, don't you know.

The boys had got on to Simpson's change of exercise.

Probably Whiskers had remembered his fall in the ditch, and had changed his mode of taking the air on that account.

The boys remembered it at all events.

They had not been fully satisfied with the result of that snap.

They had expected to hear some very choice invective from Simpy, and he had grievously disappointed their hopes.

They concluded to give him another trial.

Well, they knew all about the pony and cutter business.

They knew just when Whiskers went out and when he came back.

Consequently one cold, frosty morning they laid for him.

Pepper had the pony and cutter at the front gate at the usual hour.

Out came Solomon Simpson, arrayed in a pea jacket, a pair of driving-gloves and a fur cap.

He had one other things, of course, but these were the most noticeable.

There had been a light fall of snow during the night, Simpson observed.

It had really fallen that morning.

The boys had made it fall on the front walk themselves.

The light coating of snow merely covered a trap they had set.

The professor of English branches stepped briskly forth and planted his number nines on the walk.

They sprang up as soon as they were planted.

Whack!

Down went Simpson on his back.

He slid clear way down to the gate.

The boys had fixed things so that he could do it with neatness, elegance and rapidity.

"Wow!" howled the professor.

That wasn't all he said.

"Gyrating gimeracks! Sacred effluvium of smouldering polywogs! great Jehosaphat, Aminadab and Nebuchadnezzar! why in tophet don't that rawboned Mick keep that walk clear of ice?"

That was part of what he vociferated.

There was more, but it was too sulphurous for timid ears.

The boys were not disappointed at the flow of language on this occasion.

The little slide which they had prepared for Simpson was a complete success.

Moreover, the matinee had only just begun.

The curtain was simply rung up, as it were.

Simpson picked himself up, muttering anathema maranatha on Pepper, objurgating him by bell, book and candle, so to speak, and then jumped into the cutter.

"G'up!" he bawled, cracking the poor, innocent pony over the flank with the whip.

He was bound to get hunk on something.

Away shot the little nag over the snow, the runners crunching the icy particles as they glided on.

There was another trap set for Whiskers.

As he dashed around a turn in the road, hicketty clip, he ran plump into it.

The boys were having a grand snowballing match to get up an appetite.

They were divided into two equal parties, one on either side of the road.

How the spheres of congealed vapor did whizz through the air!

It was just full of them, and there were more coming.

In a shake Simpson was in the thick of it.

He couldn't stop the pony any more than he could whistle in Greek.

Hadn't he just given the little beast a belt so as to make him go faster?

Of course he had.

Well, it seemed as if every single, solitary, identical snowball was aimed at his noddle.

Perhaps it was.

At any rate he got enough of 'em to build a house.

One knocked his hat off and hung it on a tree.

Another filled his ear and made him think a mule had toyed with it.

A third spread itself all over his right eye.

Along came another and occupied the territory contiguous to his other eye.

His mouth had to be accommodated, too, and there was one for it.

The whole business didn't take half a minute, but it seemed two hours.

One good solid volley was all he got, but it was quite sufficient.

The pony got a little of it, and it made him go kiting.

The boys went on with their battle as the pony and cutter went spinning down the road.

When they disappeared the fight stopped.

Those young rascals had had all the exercise they wanted.

Fortunately Simpson had not identified them, or he might have given them some more when he returned.

He did not come back by the same route he went.

The boys might still be snow-balling each other.

He did not take any more sleigh rides either, without first ascertaining if the road were clear.

It was a picnic for the boys, and it had all happened so naturally that no one could blame them.

That was the way that they generally got things up when they gave their minds to it.

That little snap gave them something to laugh at for a week.

All the same they did not stop at that.

They were ready for another as soon as it came along.

Old Peter had not been really squared for what he had done to them, since Baldy had caught the snap intended for Pegtoes.

Now was as good a time to settle with him as any and perhaps better.

In fact, any time would do to work off a racket on Peter.

The time came booming along before the boys knew it.

Mrs. Dodger, the housekeeper, had a married daughter living in a town about ten miles away.

One evening the daughter came over to see her ma and stay all night.

She brought two little responsibilities with her, aged seven or eight months.

They were twins, two boys with bald heads, lusty lungs and fat chops.

The mother and old Dodger thought that they were just two little angels.

There are several varieties of angels, however.

Whatever kind they were, they could holler like blue blazes when things didn't go to suit them.

Cynthy Ann, their mother, had brought them over for their grandma to see, Mrs. Dodger having never had that felicity.

The husband remained at home, and had a good night's rest for once.

Well, Cynthy Ann arrived just before dark when the boys were all out of doors enjoying themselves.

Peter was down in the cellar juggling with the furnace, and knew nothing of the new arrivals.

The fond mother came up from the depot in a covered wagon, with her two babies in her lap.

They were bundled up till they looked like little Esquimaux so that they might not catch cold.

Pepper helped Cynthy Ann out of the wagon, babies and all, for she would not trust her precious darlings to any one.

The boys witnessed the arrival and Johnny winked at Billy in a way that meant much.

When Cynthy Ann met her ma there was the greatest hugging and kissing time you ever saw.

Dodger wanted to see the dear little tootsey-wootsey duckies right away and kiss 'em most to death.

The young cherubs objected to being served in this fashion, for it was meal time, according to their notions.

They set up a terrible howling and would not be comforted with kisses or honeyed words or any such humbug.

Cynthy Ann was obliged to attend to them, and that gave the housekeeper a chance to boss the servants in the preparation of supper.

The boys would have fared badly that night but for the importunities of those kids.

Therefore it was very naughty and ungrateful of them to play the racket that they did upon those precious lambs.

Here was the chance to get off a good joke on Peter.

He hated babies as much as he hated Blodgett's boys.

King Herod was just the boss kind of a man in his estimation, and he would have liked to emulate that bad monarch's example in his disposition of youngsters.

After supper was over and the boys were free to go about as they chose for an hour or so, Johnny met Billy in the hall.

"I've got a good one for Petey," remarked young Brown.

"Let's have it straight," returned young Bounce.

"Hook the kids and give 'em to Peter."

"He'll strangle 'em."

"He won't know what they are."

"How are you going to do it?"

"Listen."

It was a dandy snap, but one or two extra boys were needed in order to carry it out well.

There was no trouble in getting any number of assistants.

Just before the boys were supposed to go into the big study room for a couple of hours, Johnny and Billy worked their snap.

Mrs. Dodger and Cynthy Ann were sitting by the kitchen fire swapping gossip over a pot of strong tea.

The angels were sound asleep on an old fashioned settle, placed behind a clothes-horse over in one corner near the door.

Peter was in his room scraping off some of the superabundant hair on his face with a big razor.

Johnny and Billy had a big clothes basket between them just outside the kitchen door.

Dodger and Cynthy Ann were busily chinning when a knock came at the door leading outside.

Johnny and Billy were at the hall door, you must understand.

Dodger got up, went to the door and found a tramp.

She had to take a lamp with her to see who it was.

That left the hall door, and the clothes-horse, and the snoozing kids in deep shadow.

The tramp was Sam fixed up for the occasion.

He chinned away with Dodger and Cynthy Ann for five minutes trying to bulldoze them into letting him have a bed and a bite.

While he was thus engaged, Johnny and Billy, with socks drawn over their shoes, sneaked in and swiped the babies.

When Sam saw that the coast was clear he dusted, and the two women went and sat down.

Our two jokers luggered the darlings off up-stairs in the big basket.

Those wicked boys got a lot of burned cork and blackened the head, neck and hands of one of the kids, leaving the other as he was.

Then they tied a big piece of carpet over the basket, put on a card addressed to Peter Pilgrim, Esq., and luggered it along the hall to Peter's room.

That worthy was just washing up after his shave.

The boys set the basket down, banged on the door and decamped.

"Come in!" bawled Peter.

No one came.

He repeated the invitation.

Still no one entered.

Then he opened the door and discovered the basket.

"Hallo, guess the skipper has sent me a present for the holidays."

Peter had a queer notion that he was invaluable, and that everybody wanted to make him presents.

He dragged the basket into the room, wondering all the time what was in it.

There was only one sure way of finding out.

That was to take off the cover.

Peter did so and revealed the sleeping cherubs.

One was white and the other black.

"Avast there, ye lubberly sea dogs!" he howled.

"Somebody's been taking a wrong reckoning, I guess."

The babes awoke at the sound of Peter's bull-like voice.

Then they began to howl.

Either of them would have been bad enough.

Both together, they were terrors.

"Shut up, you brats!" yelled Peter, "or I'll fire you out the wiader."

she gasped. "The dear, precious sweet angels. There, there, tunnins, mommer's a-tomin'."

Dodger jumped up likewise, but she was scared.

"Them children ain't in this kitchen, Cynthy Ann," she screamed. "They've just walked away and fell into the well."

"Shucks, ma! They're only babies."

Then she let out a shriek that beat any steam whistle you ever heard.

"They're gone, kidnapped, stolen!" she howled.

Just then little Pepper rushed in, all out of breath.

It wasn't Pepper, but it looked just like the little runt.

It was Billy Bounce fixed up in imitation of the little gardener.

"Och hone, Mrs. Dodger!" he bawled, "phwat do yez think? Peter has run away wid the kids and the devil only knows phwat he's goin' to do wid them. Run, hurry up, he has them up in his room neow."

In fact the caterwauling of the kids could be heard above all other sounds.

"Oh, the villain!" gasped the old woman.

"My sweet sugar plums," snickered Cynthy Ann, getting hysterical.

Then they both sailed out of that kitchen and up-stairs.

There were breakers ahead for Peter Pilgrim.

CHAPTER XVI.

OLD STUMPJACK was having a monkey and parrot time with those two kids.

They were there, and he didn't know what to do with 'em any more than a cow.

He didn't want 'em, and yet he didn't know how to get rid of them.

The more he yelled at them the louder they bawled.

"Guess somebody must ha' thought I wanted to start a museum," he growled. "One black kid and one white one, and twins, too. Scuttle 'em both, I don't want 'em."

Just then up came Cynthy Ann and Mrs. Dodger.

They burst into the room like twin cyclones.

"There they are, the precious darlings!" screamed Cynthy Ann.

"Oh, you old reprobate!" cried the Dodger. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"And he's gone and blacked up one of the dear little duckies so that I wouldn't know it, the villain," howled the mother.

Peter began to see through the hole in the brick.

"Are them your—?"

"Oh!" yelled Dodger.

"Ah!" howled Cynthy Ann.

Then they both fell upon him.

Peter would just as soon have been tackled by two wild cats.

They scratched and they bit and they clawed.

They pounded and slammed and mauled.

All the while they addressed him in the choicest terms.

The kids added their yells to the general din.

The boys appeared also, and howled and shrieked delightedly.

"Go in, Dodger, old girl, give him hallelujah."

"Give it to the kidnapper, Cynthy Ann, give it to him."

"Club him with his wooden leg, the old wretch."

"Pull his whiskers out, the robber!"

These two women needed no encouragement, but just sailed in.

Peter was a terribly used-up individual in a few seconds.

His coat was torn from his back, his shirt was in ribbons and his face was a sight to see.

At last he broke away from the two angry women.

There was no other way of escape and so he bolted out of the window.

He took the sash with him, having no time to raise it.

He fell into a big water butt outside.

No one went to his rescue and he had to get out as well as he could.

Then the women seized the yelling kids and returned to the kitchen.

The boys were square on the old man now, in the way of snaps.

This one paid up for all the spiteful tricks he had played on them.

It left a handsome balance in their favor, if anything.

They went to their studies highly satisfied with the result of their little racket.

Peter sneaked down into the cellar, and did not dare to show up till long after Dodger and her daughter had gone to bed.

The next day he looked as if he had been having a tussle with a threshing machine.

The two women did not offer him any more vio-

lence, but they wouldn't speak to or even look at him when he appeared.

The old crank was just dying to know who had left that basket at his bedroom door.

He did not ask any one, but he tried to find out, all the same.

One of the boys must have done it, beyond a doubt.

The professor was not the man to play a joke like that.

Neither were Simpson and the rest likely to do it.

The two women were left out, to begin with.

Then it must be either Pepper or one of the boys.

Stumptoes decided upon the little gardener after due deliberation.

He was the only one who had access to the culinary department.

Having settled this vexed question to his entire satisfaction, Peter next debated as to how he might be revenged on the gardener.

There was no earthly use in fighting him.

Pepper could wallop Peter with one hand, and not half try either.

There was only one way in which to get square. He must play a return joke on the gardener.

How was this to be done?

Peter set what wits he had to work to devise some good scheme.

Johnny could have given him no end of points.

Johnny was not asked, however, and knew nothing about it.

Catch the old curmudgeon going to the boys for assistance.

He would see them hanged, drawn and quartered first.

Well, he must think of some good joke, and after much cudgeling of his brain he found one.

Then he proceeded to develop it with celerity.

It wasn't much of a snap, but it was pretty good for Peter.

There was plenty of snow on the ground just now, for Christmas was coming.

Well, that wooden-legged sinner went out one night shortly before bed time and brought in a whole big tubful of snow.

This he deposited in Pepper's bed right down the middle.

Pepper slept up-stairs in a cold room, and the snow did not have much time to melt.

Having fixed the gardener's bed for him, Peter stumped down-stairs.

He did not care to await the result of his little snap.

Pepper went up soon afterward, threw off his clothes and jumped into bed.

"Begob, me bed needs airin' bad," he muttered.

"Faix, it's as cold as ice."

He supposed it would become warmer after a bit, and he began to compose himself for sleep.

The heat of his body warmed the snow and things began to get moist.

"Begob, I don't know phwat makes me so cowld. Some wan must have lift a windy open."

He did not get up to see, however, but went right on trying to get to sleep.

The melting snow made times lively for him and he rolled over.

That brought him right into the middle of it.

He had only had his back against it before.

"Howly, gridirons!" he howled, leaping out of bed and taking all the covers with him, " who pit red-hot coals in me bed?"

If you don't think snow burns, jump naked into a drift of it and find out.

Well, poor Pepper tripped himself up with the bed clothes and then began to think that he was cold instead of hot.

He lighted a candle and located the trouble at once.

"Begorrah, neow, that's a foine thing to put in a man's bed. Shure, I'm no polar bear to sleep on a cake av ice or a shnow dhrift."

He fired the snow out of the window, rolled himself up in the blankets, and was soon sound asleep, and that was the end of Peter's little joke.

Old Pégtoes expected that Pepper would accuse him of monkeying with his virtuous couch the next time they met.

Pepper never even mentioned the little affair.

Stumpjack wasn't satisfied with that.

He was bound to receive some recognition.

"Sleep putty well, last night?" he asked.

"Begob, I did."

"Liked your new bed, hey?"

"Begob, I did."

"Used ter that sort?"

"Begob, I am."

"What, yer red-headed lubber, used to sleepin' in snow banks?"

"Begob, I'm not."

"Well, you had one to sleep on last night."

"Begob, I did not."

Pepper had tumbled now, but he wasn't going to give Mr. Pilgrim satisfaction.

"You did, I tell ye," said Pégtoes.

"Well, maybe I did, but it didn't trouble me any. I do remember neow that it seemed a bit cowlder than usual whin I got into bed."

"By gosh! I should think it was. Did yer sleep in that snow all night?"

"I suppose I did av there was anny there. You seem to know all about it."

"Course I do, 'cause I put it there, yer red-headed sculpin."

Peter wasn't going to have any of his snaps wasted.

If folks did not know when they had one of his rackets played on them, he was going to let 'em know.

"So yez pit snow in me bed, did yez?" asked Pepper.

"Yes, I did. Good joke, wasn't it?"

"Troth, it's not snow that yez'll be sleepin' an wan av those days, Misster Peter, but something quite different; something that'll melt the iron socket an yer wooden leg, begob."

Peter was still unsatisfied.

He had expected to see Pepper get tearing mad. Pepper was as cool as if his name had been snow.

He didn't seem to have any intention of getting mad, either.

That did not suit Peter.

"That's for putting those two brats at my door," he said.

"Phwat two brats, begob?"

This was the first time Pepper had heard of them.

"The housekeeper's daughter's brats, you red-headed Idjit."

"And I pit them at yure dure?"

"Yes, yer did."

"And ye pit snow in me bed to pay for it?"

"Yes, I did, scuttle yer old hulk."

"Begob thin, ye're a bigger fool than I thought ye wor. Sure, I know who pit the babies at yer dure."

"Who was it?" asked Peter eagerly.

"Faix, there he goes neow," cried Pepper, suddenly jumping up and running towards the door, the little interview having been held in the kitchen.

Peter leaped from his chair and followed Pepper, hoping to get a sight at the culprit.

Pepper swung the door open, jumped aside, thrust out one of his big feet and away went Peter right into a big snow drift.

"Faix, av ye're so fond av shnow," remarked the gardener, "take yer fill av it for wanst."

Then he slammed the door shut, went in, sat by the fire and observed:

"Begob, if Peter wants to be a practical joker, he'd better take lessons av the byes. Sure, there's not wan av them that couldn't give him points, for they've forgot more than he'll ever know if he lives to be as ould as Metoosnum's jack ass, begob."

There was a coldness between the janitor and the gardener after this.

Peter brought some of it in with him, in fact, when he returned.

He only went into the drift as far as his ankles.

He went in head first, however.

It took him till noon to thaw out, notwithstanding his fiery rage.

After that Pepper and Peter did not speak as they met.

Pepper did not mind that a copper's worth.

He became so good-natured on that account that he told Johnny and the others all about the gag on Peter.

That made them think that it was about time that they worked off one on that weary Pilgrim themselves.

He had not enjoyed the last one and so they thought that they would give him one more to his liking.

It was Billy Bounce that got this one up.

He belonged to a joking family and playing off rackets was second nature to

hands and legs with a clothes-line, and put him in the big basket.

They also tied him in, wrapping an old horse-blanket around it so that he could not get out.

One leg hung over, and his wooden stump stuck straight, but that did not matter.

Then they grasped the precious casket, carried it up-stairs and placed it in front of Simpson's door.

Billy laid a big placard on top, and then caressed the door with his foot.

The other boys did the same, beating a regular tattoo on it.

"Hallo, there! What's that?" yelled Whiskers from within.

They went up to their little beds, and were soon sound asleep.

Meanwhile Peter was trying to break loose, but could not do it.

Simpson smoked a pipe, read the paper through, toasted his shins at the fire till they were done brown, and fell into a doze while waiting for the boys to come back.

He woke up at two in the morning, just as the light went out.

He never thought another word of Peter or the boys.

He chuck off his clothes and resumed his nap with a clear conscience.

Any one that could scare up a dollar for a ticket was allowed to attend.

It was to be held in the hotel parlors, which were quite large for a country tavern.

They were on the second floor, and so no one could hang around the windows and see all the fun without buying a ticket.

Some of the boys at Blodgett's were given permission to attend the affair, provided they were not out too late.

Johnny Brown determined to go, but he said never a word about his costume.

He had it picked out, however, and it was the king pin of the entire collection.

Billy Brown was going as Old Mother Hubbard,



Johnny got on his feet in a jiffy and ran off, holding the slipper aloft. Everybody laughed except the girl and her fellow. The bear made a dive for the door, chuck the slipper at the head of a clown with a long nose, and then disappeared.

The boys danced away, and out came Whiskers with a lamp in his hand.

When he came out the next morning he nearly stumbled over that big turtle in the hall.

Peter hadn't been able to release himself all night.

He was just as mad at Simpson as he was at the boys now.

Whiskers laughed harder than before and said: "Well, that takes the bun! So they didn't come back after all? Well, well!"

Then he wept away laughing, found Pepper, and told him to go and cut Peter loose.

Pegtoes was mad enough, but he did not know who had played the racket on him, and so had to grin and bear it.

"Poor little darling," chuckled Simpson. "No body in all this cruel world would take him in!"

Then he thought the joke such a good one that he never mentioned it to Blodgett, and those jolly boys got off without even a jawing.

Just about this time the holidays came around.

Nearly all the boys were going home for Christmas and New Years, and the place would be deserted.

There was some fun to be had before they went, however.

A night or two before Christmas there was to be a grand fancy dress ball and masquerade in the village hotel.

and Sam was to be the dog belonging to the aforesaid ancient dame.

The dude went along because the others went.

He thought that he would not put on a costume, however.

The thing wasn't high-toned enough to suit him.

If he could have gone as Romeo or Cardinal Richelieu or Lohengrin, he might have attended.

The costumes brought up from the city did not suit him at all.

"You might wear your nightgown and go as a cigarette," suggested one.

"Or get inside a gun-case and go as a length of gas-pipe," said another.

"Put on a silver head and go as a cane, Harris," said Billy.

"You might go as the skeleton dude," added Johnny.

Harris did not say anything, but he went into town with the rest.

Then they lost sight of him.

The ball-room was a scene of bewildering beauty.

There were two fiddlers, a fellow with a harp,

a fiddler at the piano, and a fluteist.

American flags were hung around the walls, and there was at least five yards of evergreen roping and three holly wreaths.

The professor was not as fly as he thought for.

The boys had no notion of coming back to see how Peter was getting on.

They were quite satisfied to let the joke stand, just as it was.

The costumes were something superlatively elegant.

There were knights in silver paper coats, pages in red and yellow flannel, courtiers in paper muslin suits, and no end of clowns, cowboys, Indians, devils and fat boys.

The girls were out in force, too, and were gotten up regardless.

There were Bo Peeps and Red Riding Hoods, princesses, flower-girls, gypsies, beggars, nuns, and nondescripts of every sort.

It was quite bewildering to watch them all, in fact.

Blodgett's boys were gotten up in various rigs, but Johnny Brown took the tart.

He went there in his bearskin.

That is to say, he was dressed in the skin of a bear.

It fitted him like a glove, and he would have passed unchallenged in the highest bear society.

The thing covered him completely, head, feet, hands and all.

Nobody knew him, and he had no end of fun.

He danced once or twice in quadrilles and made any amount of amusement.

Then he waltzed with the prettiest girl in the room, and carried out his assumed character by giving her a jolly good hug.

After that he began to cut up high jinks.

He got down on all fours and ran around the room, scaring hysterical people into fits.

He was getting rather warm inside his suit, however, and concluded to take a rest.

Running about on all fours between dances, he presently came to a bench where a girl and her fellow were chinning.

The girl wore some stunning kind of rig, all lace and feathers, and had long striped stockings and low slippers.

Johnny, frolicking about a la bear grabbed one of those low Cinderellas and yanked it off the girl's foot.

She screamed and yelled and threatened to faint.

Her fellow, rigged out like Buffalo Bill, jumped up and began to talk business very fast.

Johnny got on his feet in a jiffy and ran off, holding the slipper aloft.

Everybody laughed except the girl and her fellow.

The bear made a dive for the door, chucked the slipper at the head of a clown with a long nose, and then disappeared.

CHAPTER XVII.

THERE was considerable excitement in that ball room, after Johnny had skipped out in his bear-skin suit.

The girl got her slipper back, and did not faint, but her fellow was very mad.

"Wait till that bear comes back again," he muttered.

In a few minutes the bear did come back again.

Buffalo Bill was waiting for him.

The real William never displayed such nerve as did the counterfeit.

As soon as that bear was well inside, Bill waltzed up to him.

"Insult my gal, will you?" he demanded.

Then he hauled off and pasted Bruin right between his lovely black eyes.

Over he went like a row of bricks, flat on his back.

"I'll teach you to come in here and insult a gal of mine, you sucker," cried Buffalo Bill in a rage.

He was ready to give bruin another as soon as he got up.

Off flew the bear's head and up he got, looking very mad.

"Blawst yah impudence," he said. "I've only just come in, and I don't know nothing about yaw guy, be Jove."

It was Harris, the dude, who spoke from within the bearskin.

How is this?

Didn't Johnny have on that skin in the last chapter?

He did for a fact.

He did not have it on now, however.

It was the dude, sure pop.

Thereby hangs a tail which I will proceed to unwind.

When he skipped out of the ball room after purloining the young lady's slipper, he went below to the general sitting-room, office and bar of the hotel.

Here he took off his head so as to get a breath of air.

That is to say, he took off his bear's head, not his own.

Among the company assembled in the room was the dude.

The affair up-stairs was not high toned enough for him and that's why he was not there.

When he saw Johnny, however, he was very much delighted.

"Aw, be Jove, don't yah know, theah's something 'owginal," he remarked. "Funny I didn't think of it meself."

Johnny saw the way to a good snap.

"I'll lend it to you, Harris," he said, cordially.

"Weally?" said the delighted dude.

"But I haven't got a ticket and I don't want anybody to know me. They will, don't yah know, if I go and buy one."

"Here's a return check, that's just as good."

"Aw, thanks, awfully, Brown. Very elevah ideah, 'pon me wawd."

Then Johnny took off the bear's dress and gave it to the deluded dude.

That's how Johnny did not get that sockdolager in the jaw intended for him.

Harris was very much surprised and protested his entire ignorance of having done anything wrong.

"I've only just come in, be Jove!" he declared. That didn't save him.

The angry rustic proceeded to wipe up the floor with him.

It was ten times hotter in that bear skin than Johnny had found it.

The poor dude was finally rescued, and then matters were explained to him.

"Yaw might have told me that at fawst," he wailed, "then I could have explained."

Now, of course, he knew that Johnny had played a racket on him.

He went in search of the young joker at once.

Johnny had put on another costume and wasn't to be seen.

The dude not only lost his revenge, but he had to pay for the damage done to the bear rig.

That only made him madder yet and he resolved to have no more to do with Johnny Brown.

He forgot that Johnny might want to cultivate his further acquaintance, especially if there were any gags to be worked.

Well, school broke up the next day for the holidays, and the boys went home.

When they came back they were just as ready for jokes as ever.

The first victim was Pepper.

One evening, after supper, he had been fooling around the barn and went to the kitchen to get warm.

Billy and Sam were waiting for him.

"Hallo, Pepper, how did you pass your holidays?" asked Sam, getting in front of him.

"No thanks to ye, I had a foine toime," said the runt.

"Lots of presents, I suppose, eh, old man?"

"Ah, don't be talkin' to me," growled Pepper. "Can't yez see I'm perishin' wid the cold."

Billy had been at work in the meantime.

He had fastened a smoldering rag to the tail of Pepper's jumper while Sam was chinning.

"Glad to see us back, I suppose, aren't you?" asked the confederate.

"I am not, av yez want the truth eout av me," sputtered the red-headed midget.

"Oh, yes, you are."

"Go an neow an' don't be harashin' me," said Pepper, pushing the boy aside.

The wind meanwhile had fanned the burning rag into a glow, but not into flame.

Pepper sailed into the house with a wake of smoke following him, like a steamer, and made his way to the kitchen.

There was nobody present in this sanctum.

Pepper smiled and went for a chair to draw in front of the fire.

That would have put him between two fires, as it were.

Suddenly the smell of something burning assailed his olfactory.

"Begob, I think the missus has left something in the oven, and it's burning!"

Then he grabbed the knob on the oven door.

It was hot and Pepper soon found it out.

"Begob, there's something burning neow," he howled, as he stuck his finger in his big mouth.

Then he opened the oven door with his foot.

The place was empty.

Still he could smell something burning.

In fact, it was worse than ever.

"Sure I wouldn't think there was such a difference beehune inside and out. Begob, I'm as hot as foire."

Then he tried the other oven.

That was also empty.

"Faix, maybe it's something in one av the pots."

With that he lifted the lid of one of them.

A cloud of steam rushed up into his face.

He dropped the lid with a howl and jumped back.

It fell on the floor with a terrible clatter and scared the cat into a fit.

The smell of burning increased most decidedly.

So did the heat of the room apparently.

"Begob I don't care if the whole business burns up," Pepper growled. "She has a right to sbte in and luck afther things."

Just then old Peter came stumping in.

"What's burning?" he asked, sticking up his nose.

"Faix, that's phwat I'd like to know. I've been tryin' to find eout for the last tin minyutes."

Then Peter caught sight of Pepper's smoldering jumper.

Here was an opportunity for a first-class racket.

"Hol' guess I know what it is," he chuckled,

"and I'll put it out."

"Phwere is it, ye ould crow? Can't yez tell a body?"

Peter caught up a pail of water sitting by the side of the sink.

"Here it is!" he cried.

Then he let Pepper have it right in the back.

The fire was put out in a jiffy.

So was Pepper—very much put out, in fact.

"Hould an!" he gasped. "Phwat's that for?"

"To put out the fire, yer lubber," returned Peter.

At that moment the ancient Dodger entered.

Perhaps she was a little bit mad.

Just a little.

She saw the water running in rivulets and making little puddles all over her clean floor.

She likewise saw the oven doors open and everything at sixes and sevens.

She also saw the two freaks intruding upon the sanctity of her especial domain.

No wonder she was mad.

She grabbed up a broom and began to sweep.

The first thing she swept was Pepper's hat.

She swept it clean off his head in a twinkling.

It was a wonder she had not made him bald-headed.

Two inches lower and his head would have gone as well.

Then she sailed into old Pegtoes.

She had no love for him at the best of times.

Just now that article was the scarcest thing in the market.

She banged his hat over his eyes to begin.

Then she caressed him on both cheeks with her broom.

After that she whacked him over the noddle with it.

She next returned to Pepper, so that he might not feel neglected.

Bang went the broom-stick over his shins.

Smash, it carromed against his ribs.

Whack! and he caught it over the knuckles.

"Now get out of here, the pair of you!" she screamed, banging away, left and right.

She was so mad that she actually hit what she aimed at.

She could never have done that in her cool senses.

It only shows how terribly excited she must have been.

Peter and Pepper began to think that they were not wanted in the kitchen.

They both got out of that in double-quick time.

They adjourned to the cellar, leaving Dodger to clean up after them.

"Begob, I don't know neow phwat it was that wor burning," observed Pepper.

"You must be as blind as a coot!" snorted Peter.

"Phwat wor it?"

"Yer own jacket, yer bloomin' idjut."

"And I wor bloind not to see ut?" Begob, d'yez think I have eyes in the back av me head?"

Then he drew a three-legged stool up to the fire and proceeded to warm himself.

Peter had received all the warming he cared for just then.

He sat up half dazed and growled out:

"Wot yer want to do that fur, ye carrot-headed pirate?"

"Only for fun, jist," said Pepper, quietly.

"Get out o' this cellar you bandy-legged, lobster-eyed scullion!"

"I will not," said Pepper, proceeding to light a pipe.

"Yes, yer will, yer hamstrung, owl-eyed bog-trotter."

"Aisy, now, aisy," muttered Pepper, with a puff-

Consequently the boys were out of doors most of the time.

One afternoon, when it was bright and shiny and kind of half warm, they were all out in the deserted garden looking for larks.

Pepper had been washing carriages, there being a prospect that wheels instead of runners would have to be used before long.

A length of hose lay at the foot of the low wall dividing the garden from the lawn.

The water was gently gurgling out at the nozzle as Johnny lifted it from the ground and began to investigate.

"Somebody wants a bath," he remarked, as he pointed the nozzle at the boys.

Just then Johnny let the water fly once more. Pepper got it, gave a yell, turned half around and fell slap bang on top of Peter as the latter was about to get up.

"Swim out, you're beyond your depth," yelled Johnny.

Then the boys faded away and left the two misfits to fight the thing out in their own way.

Pepper's way was to grab up both buckets and bang Peter with them till he had sense enough to skin out.

Old Pegtoes didn't have the ghost of a show that time.

"Begob, yez have no shteam pipe to turn an me



Off flew the bear's head and up he got, looking very mad. "Blawst yaw impudence," he said. "I've only just come in, and I don't know nothing about your guyl, be Jove."

puff at his pipe. "Av ye gets me warrumed up wanat, I'm warse nor a volcanyer."

"Yer are, hey?" said Peter, getting up.

Then he went to the furnace, turned a faucet and let out a jet of hot steam right in Pepper's neck.

The runt tumbled over backwards, smashed the stool to bits, and chucked his pipe to the furthest corner of the cellar.

He didn't monkey with old P. Pilgrim after that.

On the contrary, he got out of that cellar before any more steam-pipes bursted in his face.

"Niver moind," he growled to himself. "I'll get aven wid the wooden-legged misfit av a mon av I have to wait forthy years, begob!"

The boys had not seen the end of this little tragedy, but the beginning of it gave them enough to laugh at the rest of the evening.

The next fellow that came in for a racket at the hands of those lively boys was Peter.

They were always ready for him, but now-a-days he began to get more cranky than usual and that's the reason they went for him.

The January thaw arrived about this time and the weather was rather mild.

They skipped out pretty lively, and just then Peter came from the house.

At the same time Pepper emerged from the stable.

Johnny stood in an angle of the wall out of sight. First came Peter, stumping along in his graceful way.

Johnny raised the hose, took Peter in the nose, and sprinkled all his nice clothes.

The janitor wheeled quickly around, and stood gazing blankly at the spot where he thought the water came from.

Around the corner came Pepper with two big buckets of water in his fists.

As he swung around there came a collision.

One bucket hit Peter's wooden leg a stunning crack and knocked it from under him.

He sat down in the other pail with neatness and dispatch.

That upset Pepper and Peter got the other pail all over him.

Of course he had to knock the first pail out of Pepper's hand, and now it overturned with him, giving him a second ducking.

"Begob, it serves ye right, ye clumsy divil," snarled Pepper. "Sure, it's freshenin' up yez need, anyhow."

neow," warbled Pepper. "I tould yez I'd be even wid yez."

Peter was satisfied to let it stay even just then.

He took very little interest in life apart from getting dry togs on him.

Not even the thought of revenge entered his mind at that time.

That came later, when he was dry and comfortable and had time to think.

Then he laid all his mishaps at the feet of those boys.

Putting this and that together he came to the conclusion that they were the parties responsible for his troubles.

He had been living an easy life for the last three or four weeks, but now his troubles had begun again.

Of course it was the boys.

"The young land sharks!" he grumbled; "they don't give me a decent watch below, they don't, and when I'm on deck it's vexation from mornin' till night."

It was high time that he paid off old scores, he reasoned.

Therefore, he set about making things pleasant for Johnny Brown & Co.

He knew how to do that to perfection, and had a way of his own.

He did not ring the first bell in the morning till breakfast was on the table, and the boys had to eat their hash cold.

Then he set all the clocks back after the boys had gone in to school, and kept them in half an hour over time.

These were only a few of the things he did.

However, the boys soon tumbled to him, and made up their minds to get even.

You bet they would do it, too.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE boys at Blodgett's were bound to get even with Peter.

He had been misbehaving himself of late, and they were tired of it.

That's why they wanted to get square.

It was Billy who put up the next job on him.

He was just as good at these little affairs as Johnny.

It was all in the firm, however.

What one did not think of the others were ready to invent.

However, before the little snap could be worked something else happened.

This was a snap on the dude.

It came about naturally enough, and the racket on Peter was postponed.

About this time the boys had concluded to work off another racket on Harris, the one, only and original dude of the establishment.

He had been getting rather fresh of late, and the boys thought he ought to have a lesson taught him.

Circumstances conspired nicely to help the boys out in this emergency.

One of the nice girls in town gave a party, and invited all the boys to attend.

She lived in a swell house, and belonged to the very condensed milk of society.

Whatever she undertook was bound to be a howling success.

There would be lots of boys and girls there, and hilarity would run riot.

She was just the sort of girl to catch onto a snap with both hands, and Johnny resolved to get her assistance in carrying out the gag on Harris.

He had been invited, of course, for the party would be a dead failure unless he went.

It was when Johnny found out that he was going that he decided to get up a little racket.

Billy and all the other chums were let in as a matter of course.

Well, Harris just got himself up to smash.

He wore his full dress suit, patent leather pumps, black silk hosiery, white kid gloves, high collar, crush hat, and all the latest agonies.

The boys simply put on their best duds, without any frills.

Harris wanted to hire a sleigh all by his lones, but the professor told him he must go with the rest.

Pepper drove, and a jolly time they had going into town, you may believe.

The weather was rather soft and juicy, and there were signs of rain when they arrived at the lordly mansion of Miss Kitty Baxter.

They all piled out and went in, while Pepper put the horses under cover, and adjourned to the kitchen.

All the company had not arrived, but there was enough to make things lively.

What a buzzing the girls did make when they espied the boys from Blodgett's!

"Oh, there's that dude, he-he; don't he look funny, he-he-te-be?"

"And there's Johnny Brown, the worst boy in the whole school."

"Yes, and Billy Bounce. He is just too comic for anything."

Johnny, Billy and three or four others, including Harris, stopped on the way down from the dressing-room to talk to Miss Kitty, whom they espied in the library on the second floor back.

"Nice fellows you all," she said, "not to wait for the girls. You're awfully ungallant."

"Ah, go on," said Johnny, who knew his cue, "folks are just as polite now as they ever were."

"No, they aren't."

"You're another."

"You wouldn't catch any of you young fellows going after a lady's handkerchief among a lot of lions," said Kitty.

"Did lions use handkerchiefs yaws ago?" asked Harris.

"No, but a lovely lady dropped hers among them once, and her lover climbed over the railing and brought it back to her."

"Aw, why didn't he go awound astah it? I should think it would make his twousahs bag at the knees to climb ovah a nasty walling, don't yah know?"

"There isn't one of you who would go after my handkerchief if I let it fall out of a window."

"If you had only one we might, you know," chuckled Johnny.

"I'm shaw I would don't yah know," said Harris.

"You might, Mr. Harris," said Kitty, with a sweet smile; "but the others wouldn't."

Harris was about smashed on the young lady as it was.

These molasses candy words concluded the business.

"I'm shaw I would," he said, blushing clear up under his yellow bangs.

"I don't believe you would, after all."

"Just you twy me, be Jove, and see if I wouldn't."

"Very well," and Kitty raised the window.

Then she threw her handkerchief out in the cold, chilly air of night.

"There, now go after it."

"Certainly. Is this in fwont or in the weah?" and Harris started for the door.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"Down staibahs to get yaw hankawchief, of cawse."

"Oh, you mustn't go that way after it."

"I cawn't go any othaw way, can I?"

"You must go out the window after it."

"Out the window?"

"Certainly."

Harris went to the window and looked out.

"I could nevah climb down thaw, don't yah know," he gasped.

"Why not?"

"It's three aw faw stowies and theah's nothing to hold on to."

Then the boys began to guy the poor dude.

"Where's your gallantry, old man?"

"You're afraid to go down, old chappie."

"That's a nice way to back out of a thing."

"I ain't backing out," sputtered Harris, desperately, as he put one patent leather pump on the window.

"Wait a moment, Mr. Harris," said Kitty. "I was only testing you. I know very well you will go after it but I have provided a way whereby you will run no risk."

Then the young rascal brought out a big basket with a rope attached from a closet.

"We will lower you in this," she said, "and draw you up again when you have found the handkerchief."

Harris did not know about it.

"Is it stwong enough to beah me?" he asked.

"Well, it will hold a man."

"It's all right, then, Harris," said Johnny. "If it will hold a man, it ought to hold you."

"You daren't go!" said Billy.

The others made similar observations.

That settled it.

The dude was bound to go now if he got his bangs out of curl.

"Yaw, a set of noodles," he said. "I'll just show you what I can do, be Jove."

Then the basket was put out, the boys holding the rope.

It was now beginning to rain.

Not a heavy rain, but a wet one, for all that.

Harris did not discover it till he was ten feet down.

"Hold on theah!" he shouted. "Give me an umbwellah. It's waining down heah."

"You won't need it, Mr. Harris," said Kitty.

"You'll be up in a second."

Down went Harris, like McGinty in the ballad, dressed in his best suit of clothes.

He didn't go to the bottom like the man in the song, however.

He went half way, and there he stopped.

He was like the army of the King of France—neither up nor down.

Then the boys shut down the window and made the rope fast.

Just then Miss Kitty was called away.

"You'll let him up pretty soon, won't you?" she asked, with a laugh.

Oh, yes, they would let him up almost immediately.

At least they said they would.

That was a fib.

They had no such intentions.

They meant to leave him there till he got water-logged.

It was just the right kind of weather for it.

At first it was a mean, sneaking drizzle.

Then it began to rain in a thoroughly business-like manner.

After that it poured.

About that time the boys were having a dandy time down-stairs in the drawing-room.

The room was full, and all hands were enjoying themselves.

Kitty forgot all about Harris until a couple of hours had gone by.

Then she happened to meet Johnny Brown and Billy.

"How is our friend Harris?" she asked.

"Oh, he's all right," they both answered.

Kitty did not have time to ask any more questions.

It was quite lucky for the boys that she did not.

Poor Harris suffered in consequence.

There he was suspended between the roof and the ground in a basket, with the rain soaking him to the skin.

He sat down but that did not help him any.

There he was, in full evening dress, without even a hat, exposed to the drenching rain.

Those indoors had no idea how bad it was.

The rain came down in regular sheets.

Then, too, there was a busted waste water pipe just above Harris, and he got the overflow from that right in the neck.

He could not get up and he could not get down.

The ground might be forty feet below and it might be only two, but he did not dare risk a jump.

Neither could he climb up by the rope to the window above.

It was slippery with the rain, and, if it had not been, the poor dude would not have dared attempt the task.

Therefore, he was obliged to make the most of a bad bargain and stay where he was.

His high collar was sadly wilted, his shiny shirt front was like a dish rag, and the rain ran off him in rivers.

He tried to call for aid, but nobody heard him.

If he remained there much longer, he was afraid of being washed out of the basket.

Well, there he stayed, and the rain coming down like mad all the time.

The boys were too busy to go and haul him in.

He was out there in the rain till nearly one o'clock.

It did not rain so hard all that time, but it was quite sufficient.

A little of that sort of thing would have suited him as well as more.

The boys gave him enough to last him for the rest of his life.

He began to tremble, very shortly, to the fact that he had been made a guy of.

Kitty Baxter was in the plot too, he was sure.

He would never speak to her again.

As for the boys, they were just a lot of loafers.

All the indignation in the world would not have done him any good, however.

Well, just before the party broke up, the boys released him from his plight.

"We forgot all about that basket," said Johnny, in a loud voice, sticking his head out of the window.

"Yes, and it must be pretty wet," said Billy.

"Feel how heavy it is, boys."

Then all hands hauled away and fetched Harris up.

When he tumbled in they all felt surprised.

"Why, Harris is in the basket!"

"Thought you'd gone home, dude."

"It's really too bad we didn't know."

"Ain't you kind of wet, old man?"

Harris was too cold and wet to speak what he felt.

There was a fire in the library, and he almost sat on it.

The boys were profuse in their expressions of sympathy.

The truth of the matter was, they did not know how bad it was outside.

That did not do Harris any good now.

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"That's what we meant to do, all the time," warbled Billy.

"Go wash your handkerchief, Kitty, it certainly needs it," laughed Sam.

Then they all sailed out and piled into the big covered wagon.

Perhaps not!

Being late when they came in, they didn't stop to fool very much over getting into bed.

In fact, some of them hopped in without even taking the trouble to light up.

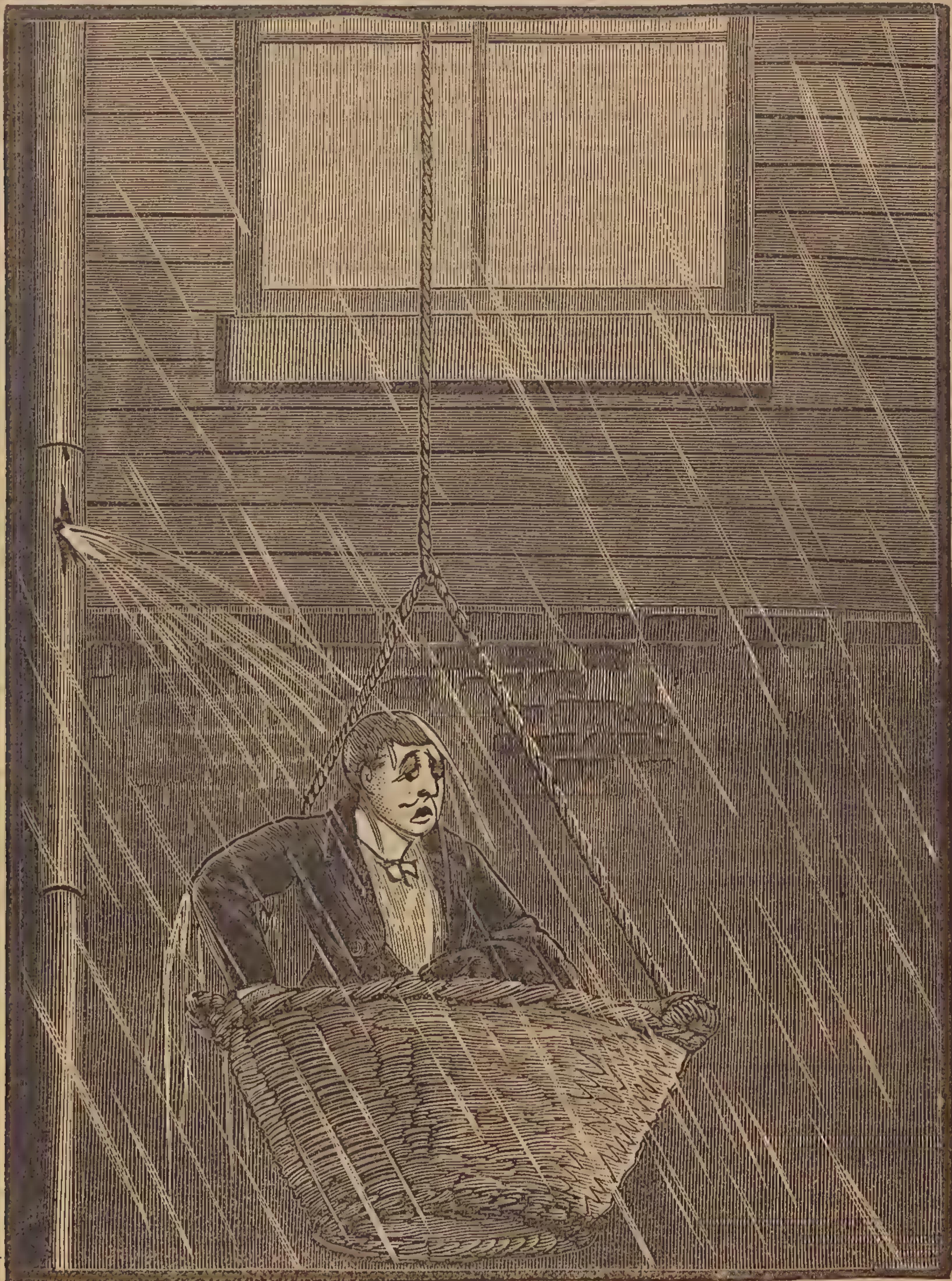
They lighted out, however, pretty suddenly.

"I'll bet he's fixed us all the same way."

"I wouldn't be surprised, young fellow."

In fact, a consultation in the hall revealed the fact that all the jokers had been soaked.

"The dude is 'square' with us for our little racket," said one.



The rain came down in regular sheets. Then, too, there was a busted waste water pipe just above Harris, and he got the overflow from that right in the neck.

He could not get up and he could not get down.

The dude wasn't with them, however.

He had swiped a vehicle on his own account and had driven home alone.

He was in the house twenty minutes ahead of the boys.

That gave him all the time he wanted.

He took every blessed sheet off of every one of the beds except his own and hung them out of the windows.

There they stayed for ten or fifteen minutes.

They were replaced on the beds just before the boys arrived.

Then that dude locked his door, drew two trunks in front of it, jumped into bed and was as warm as toast by the time the boys came up.

Wouldn't they feel nice when they struck those cold sheets, though?

"Great sawbones!"

"Caesar's ghost, wow!"

"Golly! but it's been raining!"

"Well, I would remark."

These expressions and others came floating through the halls, for the boys did not all sleep in one big room.

Consequently they nearly all got bitten, for they did not catch on to the wherefore of the why until they got between the cold sheets.

"That's the dude's work," remarked Johnny, who hopped out of bed much quicker than he had hopped in.

"That young fellow is beginning to learn something," said Billy, who roomed with Johnny.

"Yes, we'll have to give him credit for knowing a little something."

"Let's give him a long mark for his smartness."

"Yes, right in the neck."

"Oh, you won't catch him to-night."

"I don't know about that."

"Let's go in and pile all these wet sheets on top of him."

"A regular cold water pack, eh? Not a bad idea."

Then they all went in a body to the room honored by the dude's presence.

Harris had been too fly for them, however.

He was locked and bolted, and barricaded, and there was no get ting in.

They rapped and thumped and banged, but all to no purpose.

He did not pay the slightest attention to these demonstrations.

"Oh, I say, it's cold," said Billy.

"If we make too much of a racket, Simpson or somebody will come up and make it warm for us," remarked Johnny.

Then they marched away and filed into their respective rooms.

"What are we going to do?" asked Billy.

"Roll ourselves up in the blankets, and make the best of it."

"It's a wonder Harris did not soak them, too."

"Oh, he can't think of everything at once, my dear boy."

"No, and I presume he will have the brain fever after this tremendous effort of the mind."

"It was a good deal for him to think of, for a fact."

"I would have liked to get square with him tonight, though."

"Oh, let him enjoy his triumph for once."

Johnny tucked the wet sheets over a chair, snuggled himself up in the blankets and was soon sound asleep.

Billy did the same, and if the two scamps had compared notes with the other fellows, they would have found that the rest did just about as they had.

Sam slept between two mattresses, and Joe went to bed on the floor, but the majority did as Johnny and Billy did.

They all agreed to give Harris credit for one good snap at least.

They likewise agreed to something else.

That was, to work off a return snap on him at the very first opportunity.

Johnny and Billy were not the boys to let any one get ahead of them or even up to them in the matter of snaps.

They would not rest easy until they had at least come up with Mr. Harris, for they now considered him ahead.

There were troubous times in store for that dude.

Perhaps he would be a match for the boys, after all.

And then perhaps he would not.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE boys had to work off a snap on Harris.

They also had one all ready for Peter.

It was only a question as to which one they would work off first.

Chance settled the question in favor of Peter.

It happened that that old sea dog went to sleep one afternoon, having little else to do.

He went to his room, took off his stump, the better to rest himself, and lay down on the bed.

He put the stump on the chair alongside, so as to have it handy, and went to sleep.

In his carelessness, however, he left the door open.

Johnny Brown, coming that way, looked in and saw Peter asleep.

"Sleeping on his watch, eh?" remarked Johnny.

"That's rather dangerous."

Then that young scamp stole safely in and got away with Peter's leg.

He hid it under the back stairs, and then ran off to get his pals.

Billy, Sam, and half a dozen others were soon found.

To them Johnny related what he had done with old Peter's leg."

"What are you going to do next?" asked Billy.

Pepper answered the query instead of Johnny.

He came bowling along the hall at this moment, remarking in a sing-song voice:

"I had tin-hic-dollars in me inside pocket,
D'yey moind,
Oh, I mit Darby McCann an-hic-two other man,
And not a cent I had an—"

"Hallo, Pepper," cried Johnny. "Singing are you?"

"Yis, I am begor, an' I'm glad av it. Who has a b-better right, if I want to?"

Pepper had been looking into the bottom of a whisky bottle.

The fumes had probably got into his breath.

At any rate, most people would have said that he was tight.

"Here's a fresh laid snap all ready for us," whispered Johnny to his chums.

"Phwat's that ye say?" asked Pepper. "Who's Irish laid?"

Pepper had been indulging, and his temper, none of the best at any time, was worse than usual.

He must have changed his brand, for tippling usually made him good-natured.

This time, however, he was cross and ugly.

"I didn't think it was so, Pepper," said Johnny, suddenly.

"Yez didn't think phwat wor so, yer young ban-

"What Peter said; but I guess it's the truth."

"Phwat have that old timber-headed pirut been sayin' av me?"

"He said you can't drink two fingers of anything without getting boozy."

"He's a loiar!" snapped Pepper. "I've had tin fingers already, and I'm good for tree more, begor."

"Well, I'm only saying what Peter said, that's all."

"He's a loiar, an' I can prove it an him, the bandy-legged sculpin."

"He says you're sweet on Mrs. Dodger too."

"Bad luck to him, then. Him and her are a pair av them."

"Yes, and he says that you get drunk every night."

"He's a loiar, then, for I can't get hould av the stuff as often."

"Well, you'd better see him about that."

"Did he say anything else about me, the fail-sifer?"

"He says you clean your teeth three times a day."

"I niver l!" cried Pepper, in high dudgeon.

"Well, you'll have to see him about it; I'm not responsible for him."

Pepper looked as if he would very much like to see Mr. Pilgrim.

"Phwhere is the robber?"

"In this room."

"I'll teache him to tell lies about me, begor."

Away went Pepper, at an unsteady gait, in search of Peter.

The latter had not yet finished his nap.

Pepper finished it for him.

The mad little runt gave the old salt a belt over the ear that made his teeth rattle.

"Belay that, stand by!" roared Peter.

Then Pepper gave him one on the other side so that his face might not get out of shape.

"Awast there, ye lubbers!" cried Peter. "Make fast them ere fins o' yourn."

"Come on, ye blasted Britisher, till I give yer another," cried Pepper. "I'll show yez how Ireland will whip the English navy."

Peter was not an Englishman, but Pepper could explain it just as well, if he was not.

The sad sea dog staggered to his one good foot and Pepper floored him.

"Hold hard, ye lubber," roared Peter. "Give me a chance to get my decks cleared for action, ye red-headed buccaneer."

"I'll give yez all the action yez want," cried Pepper.

Then he grabbed the old shellback by the collar, yanked him to his foot and stood him against the wall.

"There ye are," he muttered, holding Peter with one hand and hauling off with the other.

"Take in the slack o' that, belay!" howled Peter.

"That's for saying I get drunk," growled Pepper.

Whack!

Poor Peter winced.

"Bout yer hellum, ye son of a lobscouse," he yelled. "Ye're on the wrong tack."

"Tak' it an this side thin, ye lyin' vilyan."

With that Pepper gave his victim a turn on the other side.

"Sheer off, blast yer top-lights. Gimme a chance to get out my guns."

Peter spoke in nautical phraseology.

Pepper thought that he meant literally to pull a gun on him.

"Don't ye dar' to shoot at me, ye black jowled prevaricator," he muttered.

"Fire on a ship in distress, will ye?" said Peter.

"Ye're distressin' looking enough, dear knows," rejoined Pepper.

Then he gave the weary Pilgrim another whack. It nearly knocked Peter's teeth down his throat. The boys were all taking in the circus from the hall.

They encouraged Pepper, but had nothing to say to Peter.

"Give him one for Dodger!"

"Show him your ten fingers, old man?"

"Make him walk the plank, Pepper."

"Hang him by his toes to the yard arm."

"Give him another shot between wind and wa-

Poor Peter was nearly used up.

Then he was braced up against the wall with Pepper belting him, or threatening to, every minute.

"Sheer off, you pirate," he wailed. "Ain't you got any more spunk than to attack a disabled wes-sel?"

Nautical phrases and salt water similes were thrown away on Pepper.

He did not care a cent for naval orders, either.

Peter might sing out sea lcs at him by the fathom, if he chose.

All Pepper wanted was to get even.

The boys enjoyed the racket first-class.

"Gimme a chance to get ship-shape, and I'll change yer tune, ye lubber," said Peter.

"Oh, I can knock yez down as convenient this way as anny."

Pepper exemplified this by laying Peter on his back.

"Awast heaving!" shouted the old salt. "Make fast l!"

"Begob, I'll make ye fast, ye leather-head!"

Then Pepper began to wipe his shoes on Peter's ribs.

He played a regular tune on them.

"Splice yer leg tackle, and belay that," roared Peter.

However, Pepper was beginning to grow tired of this sort of amusement.

"Maybe ye'll tell more lies on me," he muttered.

"That ain't in my log book at all, ye lubber," retorted Peter. "Never told no lies on ye, dod rat yer fat carcass."

"So, I'm shweet an Dodger, am I, ye ould crocodile?"

Pepper's toes punctuated the question.

"Let her go off, I say. Ye're on the wrong tack."

"And I cleans me teets t'ree times a day, does I?"

Once more the thump in the ribs.

"Luff, you beggar, you'll run me down."

"And I get dhrunk an two fingers, do I?"

Pepper was going to get in another kick.

Peter was becoming tired of the monotony of that sort of thing.

He slewed over, grabbed the little Mick by both ankles, and pulled him off his pins.

Over went Pepper on his back in a jiffy.

A flask in his pocket broke with the sudden shock and the air was very drunk.

"Bad luck to the mutton headed deceiver; he's busted me flask begor!" howled Pepper.

Then the boys all howled once more.

They did not much care whether Pepper or Peter licked.

All they wanted was lots of fun.

They would as soon laugh at Pepper as any one.

The old sea dog, appreciating his advantage, jumped on Pepper's stomach and sat there.

Pepper could not get up, what with the load he already had and his present one.

"Give it to him, old Pegtoes," cried Johnny.

"We'll see fair play."

"We always did think you could lick him," added Billy.

"Make him drink lying down," laughed Sam.

"Get him drunk."

"Stand him on his ear, Petey?"

"Club blazes out of him, Stump?"

"Baste him with your wooden leg."

These and numerous other bits of advice were given to Peter.

Strange to relate, he seemed to doubt the sincerity of his young advisers.

"Clap on sail and get out o' here, ye young pirates," he snarled, "or I'll scuttle the hull durn lot of ye."

The boys did not light out, however.

Somehow they did not seem to scare easily.

Then, too, they wanted to see the fun.

Pepper was vainly struggling to get up.

Peter sat on his bread-basket, and every now and then gave him a gentle tap.

"Won't hit me agin, yer lubber, will yer?"

No matter now he hunted for it, he could not find it.

Finally Dodger found it in her flour barrel, and of course accused Peter of putting it there.

"Oh, yes, looks likely, don't it, you old she-dragon?" snarled Peter. "Stow my leg away in the barrel and then go huntin' after it. Guess yer steerin' gear is out o' order, missis."

"Don't you dare to talk to a respectable woman like that, you old fraud," sputtered the wrathful Dodger. "What would I go and put your dirty old leg in my flour for, I'd like to know?"

"Don't know, I'm sure," retorted Pilgrim. "Women is the most onaccountable critters there is, not even sea serpents."

That is to say, cold soup in this event, for he went scousin' right into a tub of water standing just without.

The boys might have been able to state how that water got there, but certainly neither Peter nor Dodger knew anything about it.

Splash!
Swash!
Head first into the tub went Peter all at once. Then the boys suddenly appeared and began to sing:

"Rub-a-dub-dub,
Pete in a tub,
Wonder how he got there?"

Peter was not at all anxious to know that.

"Say a few more naughty words, Peter, and the ice may melt," suggested Johnny.

Finally, Mr. Peter Pilgrim gave a tremendous yank.

Up he came, but he left more than the bench behind him.

"Get better cloth next time, old salt junk," laughed Billy. "That kind is no good."

Peter lighted out of that as rapidly as possible, and the boys got a mere glimpse of the damage done.

The old pirate was hotter than ever against those young jokers, however, and it would not have been safe for one of them to be caught alone by the old sea pup.



"Awast there, ye lubbers!" cried Peter. "Make fast them 'ere fins o' yourn." "Come on, ye blasted Britisher, till I give yer another," cried Pepper. "I'll show yez how Ireland will whip the English navy."

"I'll make you see snakes, you cantankerous old catamount," replied the Dodger grabbing up a broom.

Peter knew that when Dodger took up a broom she generally kicked up a deal of dust.

He did some pretty tall dusting himself just about that time.

Hobbling out on one foot with the other in his hand, he made haste to get out of Dodger's territory.

The old gal was too expeditious for the old sea-dog.

Whack!

Biff!

Spat!

He was done on both sides like an old-fashioned Johnny cake in two shakes.

Then he got a crack behind that sent him spinning.

He had been in such a hurry to get out that he did not notice which door he took.

It was a case of any port in a storm just then.

One door led up-stairs and the other out-doors.

He took the latter, of course, being beset by contrary winds.

That last whack of the broom on the bosom of his breeches caused him to go howling into the soup.

What most interested him was how to get out. He scrambled out and began hopping away, carrying his wooden leg with him.

The ground was all covered with snow and there were icy spots as well, so that it was no picnic to go hopping along at the risk of breaking his neck every second.

He concluded to hop back into the kitchen, but Dodger had other views.

"Don't you dare track that water into my clean kitchen!" she snarled.

Moreover, she held the fort, the stout broom firmly clutched in her big hands.

Peter needed only one look at the ogre to convince him that the way into that kitchen was a no-thoroughfare.

Then he sat down on a bench to put on his leg.

When this had been accomplished satisfactorily, the boys gazing on the while, he found that there was another difficulty.

He could not get up from the bench.

He had frozen fast, the air being quite sharp, and his saturated garments sticking tight to the bench.

"Blow up and sink and scuttle and set fire and swamp yer blasted young bulks!" roared Peter, trying to pull himself loose. "This is your doin's, ye young chumps!"

The snap had been a dandy from start to finish and now the boys were ready to tackle someone else.

"There's the dude to be polished off yet," observed Johnny, when mention was made of the fact that another racket was in order.

"Yas, Mistah Hawis is just the fellah saw ouah money; don't yah know," said Billy, taking off the dude's languid manner in tip-top style.

The boys let the slim alone till the next day, but then they went for him.

That dizzy dude, wishing to be just a peg above the other fellows, had bought him a toboggan.

The old-fashioned bob sled was not good enough for him, because all the other boys had them.

Consequently Mr. Harris must needs import his coaster and get him a rig to go with it.

Now anyone else would have secured a neat but not gaudy blanket suit and let it go at that.

Harris was not that sort of individual.

His suit was white with a wide border of big red dots put on wherever a border could be stuck together with a big red, white and blue pointed cap, barber pole stockings, flaming sash and moccasins.

He looked giddy enough to set the hill on fire when he came out, dragging his toboggan after him.

The boys all had something to say when this vision suddenly burst upon them.

"Santa Claus on a drunk," suggested Johnny.

"Big Injin gone mad," remarked Billy.

"Barber poles on a lark," yelled Sam.

"Put the right tag on the puzzle and you can have it."

"Somebody has been robbing the beds."

"Catch on to the polka dots, old chappies."

"Catch on to this dot of the eye," chuckled Johnny.

That young scamp thereupon caught Mr. Harris a crack in the peeper with a snowball and made him hop.

"Let's give him a ride, fellows," yelled Billy Bounce, making a dash for the dude.

All hands followed, for they were out for fun.

They grabbed that dude and took his toboggan away from him before he knew where he was.

Then they whacked him over on his back upon the little sled and made him fast.

His dizzy sash was long enough to tie his hands and feet and strap him down securely to the side strips.

They were at the top of the hill to start with, and that made it handy.

"Here goes the dude Mazeppa, chained to the fiery, untamed toboggan," cried Johnny.

Harris did not like this sort of business.

He wanted the fellows to let him go.

"Let her go it is," giggled Johnny.

The boys dragged the dude to the edge of the slope and gave him a shove.

He couldn't go astray, for the hill was just a straight descent, with no trees nor rocks to collide against.

All the same Harris did not like it.

The thing would be sure to burst up with him on it.

His regular luck would follow him if he couldn't help himself.

Well, away he went, just a whizzing.

My! but how the wind did blow through his bangs.

He tried to yell, but when he opened his mouth the wind blew in so swift that he couldn't shut it.

He knew he was going to be busted all to smash, and he began to think over what he had ever done to amount to anything.

He was through in a second, and the toboggan, relieved of so much weight of thought, shot like an arrow from the bow.

CHAPTER XX.

THE poor dude was flying down the hill tied to his own toboggan at the rate of forty miles an hour, more or less.

Johnny Brown, Billy Bounce, and the rest of those bad, wicked boys were all watching him with the utmost glee.

Every one of them had something to say about him.

"Catch on to the lightning express train, fellows!"

"What a fast young man he is, to be sure!"

"He'll get there on time this trip if he never got there before!"

"Houp la! ain't we just going it, boys?"

He was for a fact.

Away went that toboggan lickety clip.

Poor Harris thought that his bangs would be blown off.

Well, he went down the hill a scooting, and then struck the level all a-flying.

That wasn't all that he struck by several degrees.

He bumped into a snow-covered rock that looked like a bank.

Rip!

Split!

The toboggan stood on its head in just two seconds.

Then it went all to pieces in still less time.

After that it pitched the dude ten feet into a snow-drift up to his neck.

That was ice cream for one with a vengeance.

The boys on top of the hill saw the accident to the express train.

They howled with great joy, and clapped their mittens together.

Harris failed to see any occasion for laughter.

There he was, stuck in the drift and no way to get out.

The drift was a deep one, and the more he tried to get out the more he sank.

The snow under the dude's feet was light, and let him down with neatness and dispatch.

In a little while the top of his head was all that could be seen.

That did not stay in sight a terrible long time.

Before long the boys on the hill could see nothing of him.

Poor Harris kicked and struggled, and wallowed, making a hole all around him but getting no nearer to the top.

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He was through in a second, and the toboggan, relieved of so much weight of thought, shot like an arrow from the bow.

Then the boys got on their little bobs and went down the hill.

They passed the dude and sang out to him:

"Keep on Harris and you'll fetch up in China."

"Throw us the end of your necktie and we'll haul you out."

"Why don't you climb out on your perfumery?

It's strong enough."

"Yaw all a howid lot of wude fellahs," cried the dude.

However, he managed to crawl out at last.

He did not care to take any more coasting trips.

One experience of that sort was quite sufficient.

He left the wreck of his toboggan where it lay

and returned sadly to the school.

Sleigh riding would be quite good enough for him after that.

No more of your imported pastimes for him.

"Tobogganin ain't English anyhow, don't yah know," he remarked. "It's Canadian and pwovinical, be Jove. I ought to have known bettah than to have twied it, egad."

He did not make a second attempt at it.

The boys made a bonfire of his toboggan, and his giddy suit was ripped up to make nightgowns for the Sandwich Islanders.

Well, the boys were ready for the next victim whenever he showed up.

It happened to be Peter, and rightly enough, too.

Old Pegtoes got on one of his fresh streaks, and made himself obnoxious just about this time.

He always did that, but just now he was a little more so than usual.

When it came on warm he built up the furnace fires till the boys nearly roasted, and then when a cold snap came along he let them nearly go out.

Consequently the boys were uncomfortable all the time.

Then he let the pump freeze and the boys had to drink snow water and got the colic.

These were only a few of the things he did.

They made the boys very tired.

Something must be done and Johnny suggested what?

One afternoon as Peter was in the cellar juggling with the furnace, one of the small boys bolted in and said:

"Oh, Mr. Pilgrim, hurry up and you'll catch 'em."

"Catch who, you young lubber?" asked the mild mannered Peter.

"Them boys. They're up to some mischief."

"Where?" asked Peter, ready enough to sneak on the boys.

"Up-stairs, just outside the cellar door."

Peter bit at the bait which was held out.

The little fellow was up to snuff and had been posted concerning what he had to say.

He was no sneak, if old Pegtoes was.

He was in the ring, and had been sent in as a decoy.

Peter never tumbled to that in his hurry to spy on the boys.

There was a door leading directly from the cellar to the grounds outside, as well as one going up-stairs.

Peter took this one, never noticing that the small boy went up by the other route.

Well, as soon as Peter appeared he got it in the neck.

A dozen or twenty boys stood just outside.

They all had an armful of snowballs.

Peter got the whole cargo as soon as he appeared.

He looked like a snow-man in two shakes.

Those boys plastered him from head to foot with snow.

They weren't particular to have the balls all soft, either.

Some of them made a very strong impression on Peter.

Then the boys all faded away, while the old crank proceeded to dig himself out.

Well, old Peter was pretty mad at this and determined to get square.

The old fossil did not appear to remember that he had given the boys more than abundant cause for all the pranks they had played upon him by his crankiness.

He ought to have caught it a great deal worse than he had done, if he had only stopped to think of it.

He was mad, however, and thirsted for gore, to put it mildly.

Nothing would satisfy his appetite for revenge but gore, and Gore with a big G at that.

So he set what he called his wits to work to devise a plan by which to get hunk.

He would have to try some new dodge and one that they would not suspect him of putting up.

If he could only make them think that some one else was the party playing the prank he would be all right.

Harris would do as well as the next fellow, for the boys did not like the dude, and they would be

ready to accuse him upon the slightest evidence, so old Peter thought.

Having thought the matter over Pegtoes sneaked into the dude's room, hauled out his trunks and piled them in a heap in the hall in front of Blodgett's door at a time when that worthy was busy in his room.

Then he got a lot of things belonging to Johnny and the other boys and added them to the pile.

The boys were out on the hill coasting at this time, and there was no one to disturb the cross-grained crank.

Then Mr. Peter got a big bell and began to ring it at a furious rate.

Out rushed Baldy to see what all the fuss was about.

He tumbled head-first into the pile of trunks, and there was a terrible racket.

You would have thought that the house had fallen down.

Peter, eager to be the first one on hand to accuse the boys, came hurrying up to tell the news.

He forgot all about the bell and took it with him.

"I saw 'em, I saw the young pirates" he roared as he came upon the scene.

"Saw what pirates?" asked Baldy, picking himself up.

"Brown and Bounce and Harris and all of 'em, I saw 'em ringing the bell and scurrying away, the villains. I saw 'em, but I couldn't stop 'em."

"Oh, you saw them ringing the bell did you?" asked Whiskers, coming up.

"Yes, I saw 'em, but I wasn't quick enough to prevent Mr. Blodgett from falling over the

interrupted Simpson, "and you can slide for home as fast as possible."

"Really, now, sir, I only take my orders from the cap'n of the ship and Mr. Blodgett—"

"Go!" remarked the aforesaid captain of the ship.

That meant business.

"Do you catch on?" chuckled Simpson. "You are bounced."

"It's mighty hard, when a man has done his duty—"

"Which you never did, you old fraud."

"To be put adrift like this 'ere on the sea of—"

"To be continued in our next," laughed Simp-

"Dizzy practical jokes you get up, don't you? Why, a baby could do better."

"Him get up a joke?" roared Pepper. "Faix, he knows as much av doin' that as he do av teach-
ing school."

Peter got through at last, and in no pleasant frame of mind.

He felt like strangling those boys.

They had euchred him without even playing a card.

Wouldn't he like to have them in his fists for a few minutes?

The edict had gone forth, and he was to be bounced.

The moment he appeared in the road, stumping along with his box on his shoulder, and a big grip-sack in his hand, there was a racket.

Heads appeared in all the windows, boys jumped upon the fences, and others rushed from the house, and the whole gang made its appearance.

The piazza, the fence and the walk were just lined with boys.

Every fellow in the school was present.

Even the dude was there, and made as much noise as any one.

As Peter stumped off toward the gate there arose a great shout.

How those boys did yell and scream.



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son. "Peter, you can take these trunks to where they belong."

That was the toughest part of the whole business.

Not only was his little job knocked silly, but he had all his work to undo.

He did not see why he could not have succeeded as well as the boys.

He wasn't built the same way, that's the reason.

He had to lug all those things back again, and it was not half so easy as it had been at first.

Pepper saw him at it and laughed ready to kill himself.

Simpson encouraged him, likewise, with many cheering remarks.

"Ho! you wouldn't make ten cents a day at carrying baggage."

"Get on to old Stumpjack luggin' thunks."

"I wouldn't hire you if all the porters were dead."

"You'll be shovelin' coals wan' av these days, Pether, and yez'll have to hustle farther nor that."

"Fine old joker you are, you old sea pig. Just the sort for a funeral."

"Faix, av yez don't hurry up the byes will be comin' in to help yez, ye old crab."

He tried to beg off to old Baldy, but it was no good.

Blodgett had tumbled to him at last.

Simpson supplied many bits of evidence as well.

Dodger was down on him, and Pepper could not abide him.

The boys never had had any love for him, as you all know.

Consequently there was great rejoicing.

When it was known that Peter was going, the whole crowd became hilarious.

Such good news had not been heard in months.

The boys made up their minds to have a grand celebration.

They would give Peter just the dandiest kind of a send off.

He was to leave the place in the morning.

They would be ready to start him on his way.

Peter intended to take an early start, for he felt sure that the boys would want to rattle him.

Perhaps this was the effect of a guilty conscience.

The idea of thinking he could start early enough to get ahead of those boys.

It was not to be thought of for a second.

He got up early, packed up his juds and sneak-ed out at the back door.

They stamped their feet, clapped their hands, blew on their horns, and howled.

Up went their hats in the air, handkerchiefs were waved and drums beaten.

"Hooray, hooray, old Pegtoes is going away!"

"Bully for Pete, he's leaving us for good!"

"Don't ever come back, Petey. Hooray, hooray!"

"Shake her up, boys, Stumpjack is going."

"Good-bye, old Stump! Don't come back!"

"Three cheers, fellows, the sad sea-dog has hoisted up his mud-hooks!"

That was one kind of a send-off.

Some fellows would not have been pleased with it.

Peter did not like it for a bad cent.

The boys were glad to get rid of him, and the shouts were not in his honor by any means.

He turned and gave them a look which ought to have given them the nightmare for a month.

"The young sculpins!" he growled. "Wish I had 'em alone fur half an hour where they couldn't hit back."

Peter's sour looks had a contrary effect to what he had intended.

The boys simply howled all the louder.

"Tra-la-la, old Peggs!"

"Skip the canal, old crank!"

"Glad to get rid of you. Ho, ho, ho!"

"Bully for Petey because he's going away."

Then there were more shouts, and one of the boys with a musical tendency played the "Rogue's March" on a flute.

Peter felt mad enough and mean enough to kick his own shadow. *Ho, ho, ho!*

He could hear the boys yelling as far as he could bear anything.

It was no good to kick, for then they would have yelled all the more.

Well, after Peter had departed, things went on better than ever.

Pepper became janitor and suited all hands, and although the boys sometimes played rackets on him, he took it good-naturedly and returned the compliment in kind. *Ho, ho, ho!*

There were no more complaints, and everything went along in boss style.

What became of Peter I do not know and I don't suppose any one cares, for he was nothing but an old crank anyhow.

Johnny Brown is the same jolly young fellow he ever was, and he and his chums continue to play as many snaps as of old, and that's all I've got to say about 'em.

[THE END.]

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